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Miorun Mòr nan Gall,
‘The Great Ill-Will of the Lowlander’?
Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands,
Medieval and Modern

edited by

Dauvit Broun

and

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©

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Preface and Acknowledgements

It is chastening but necessary to begin by confessing that this volume began life as a seminar series organised by us under the banner of the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Glasgow in 1997–8. From the first it was the intention to proceed to publication, and it must be made clear that the passing of a decade before that stage has been reached is in no way the responsibility of the six friends and colleagues whose contributions will be found herein. We are deeply indebted to them for their faith and patience, both of which we have sorely tried. Editor MacGregor would also wish to record his indebtedness to Editor Broun on the same grounds. Here at least has been one instance where the stereotype of Teutonic efficiency subverted by Celtic ennui would seem to fit the facts.

Of the chapters which follow, some now bear little resemblance to their original prototypes. Others have altered less or hardly at all, but footnotes update the reader on relevant scholarship which has appeared in the interim. It is the editors' belief that all the contributions remain equally valid, and that as a collective they have a contribution to make to their common theme. Potential publishers proved harder to persuade, another factor which occasioned delay. Hence the decision to publish this volume as an e-book, and as a limited print run produced in-house.

Aside from our fellow authors, we would like to thank Professor Edward J Cowan, Norma MacLeod, Dr Don Spaeth, and especially Christelle Le Riguer for invaluable assistance with the production of the e-book. The Faculty of Arts and Department of History of the University of Glasgow have kindly provided the financial support which met the printing costs. We dedicate this book to the single biggest influence upon us both as scholars, Dr John Bannerman, the pre-eminent historian of Gaelic Scotland.

Introduction

DAUVIT BROUN & MARTIN MACGREGOR

I am not ignorant that foreigners, sailing through the Western Isles, have been tempted from the sight of so many wild hills that seem to be covered all over with heath, and faced with high rocks, to imagine that the inhabitants, as well as the places of their residence, are barbarous; and to this opinion, their habit as well as their language, have contributed. The like is supposed by many that live in the south of Scotland, who know no more of the Western Isles than the natives of Italy, but the lion is not so fierce as he is painted, neither are the people described here so barbarous as the world imagines.

Martin Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland circa 1695*

Paradox, duality and division rather than unity and consistency are often presented as the essence of the Scottish experience: a 'stateless' nation without its own government for nearly three centuries; a society riven by sectarianism; an education system which denigrated its indigenous cultures, and a media which marginalised its native languages. Our history and literature abound in binary oppositions and 'polar twins': Bruce and Wallace; Robert Wringhim and his alter-ego in Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*; Jekyll and Hyde; or the Scottish and English selves which compete for possession of Chris Guthrie in *Sunset Song*. Surely the most fundamental and enduring instance of Scottish schizophrenia is that of Highlands and Lowlands. *Mìorun mòr nan Gall*, 'the great ill-will of the Lowlander', is a tag associated with the great eighteenth-century Gaelic poet and prophet of the '45 Jacobite rising, Alexander MacDonald—Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair. It has come to act as shorthand for historic Lowland hostility towards Highlanders, and for the Lowland indifference to Gaelic culture that still persists in some quarters today. The paradox that is regularly bemoaned as an impervious feature of modern Scottish identity is that Lowlanders have nonetheless been so ready to identify with Highland images—

bens and glens, kilts and bagpipes, whisky and clans—as definitive symbols of Scottish nationhood.

The origins of both the perception of a ‘Highland/Lowland’ divide and of its accompanying paradox have each been the subject of much scholarly discussion. Two acknowledged pivotal figures are the late-fourteenth century Scottish chronicler, John of Fordun, and Sir Walter Scott. A famous passage in Fordun’s *Chronicle of the Scottish Nation* is the main basis of the orthodoxy that the dichotomy between ‘Highlands’ and ‘Lowlands’ first emerged in the mid- to late fourteenth century, and became a core feature of ‘Lowland’ identity from the fifteenth century. It is also widely accepted that the paradoxical turn of appropriating ‘Highlands’ as a means of asserting Scotland’s distinctiveness began in the late eighteenth century, with the failure of the ’45 and the impact of Ossian; and became automatic in the nineteenth, particularly after Scott’s celebrated stage-managing of a Highland extravaganza for George IV’s visit to Edinburgh in 1822, and Queen Victoria’s adoption of Balmoral, purchased in 1848, as her summer residence. This book is intended to offer critical perspectives on these two key issues, individuals and epochs, and in the process to probe some core assumptions about the nature of the medieval division and modern paradox.

The essays in the book do not represent a ‘lineal’ and chronologically continuous exploration of ‘Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands’. Neither do they all branch equally from a common core, as would be the case if each essay took an agreed single dimension of the subject and tackled it from the perspective of different disciplines and source-types. Instead, a more fluid, multi-layered pattern is attempted with the intention of allowing interrelationships to be more readily appreciated and explored. Readers are not encouraged to regard this book as a comprehensive guide. It is hoped, rather, that they will find it thought-provoking and will seek to develop their own conclusions from it. Each essay, of course, is also an independent piece of work in its own right, and can be read and enjoyed on its own merits.

The book naturally falls into two sections. Part One is focused on the 'Highland/Lowland' divide in the middle and later middle ages, and Part Two on aspects of the 'Lowland' appropriation of the 'Highlands' from the later eighteenth century to the early twentieth. Each part consists of four contributions, and the relationship between the four items in each section is essentially similar. Each part opens with essays which act as surveys of the period in question, although through the medium of different source-types. Martin MacGregor provides a fresh examination of perceptions of the 'Highlands' in the work of late-medieval writers, and Anne MacLeod discusses the relatively underexploited subject of visual representations of the Highlands in the era between Macpherson's *Ossian* and the Crofters' War. This is followed in each case by a radical reappraisal of the two key figures in the current scholarly consensus about how the medieval division and modern paradox came about. In Part One Dauvit Broun develops Martin MacGregor's critique of Fordun's oft-repeated account of the Highland/Lowland divide by arguing that this ultimately has its roots not in the social or cultural realities of the mid-fourteenth century, but in the ideology and identity of the twelfth and thirteenth. In Part Two Alison Lumsden takes a fresh and deeper look at the fiction of Walter Scott, and finds that he was not simply the high literary equivalent of the artists and travellers discussed by Anne MacLeod. Instead, Scott can be read much more compellingly as interrogating and deconstructing received romantic ideas about the 'Highlands', rather than as creating and sustaining them.

Each part of the book is completed by picking up a central theme from the first two essays and approaching this from different angles. The third essay in each sequence of four explores a subject that is closely related to the second essay. In the first part Stephen Boardman adds a new dimension to the challenge to the consensus about the nature of the 'Highland/Lowland' divide by tackling head-on the assumption that the Crown was only really comfortable in its relations with the 'domesticated' lowlands of the kingdom, and was instinctively antipathetic to the 'Highlands'. He shows that the early

Stewart kings (who ruled at precisely the time when scholars have hitherto considered the 'Highland/Lowland' divide to have first become apparent) were, if anything, more intimately involved with large parts of the 'Highlands' than they were with the south of the kingdom. He also shows that the Stewarts, whose name derives from their hereditary holding of the office of steward of the royal household, embraced significant parts of Gaelic Scotland within their lordship from at least the early thirteenth century, and that some leading members of the family even bore Gaelic epithets. This tale of adaptation to life 'beyond the dusky barrier' finds an echo in the parallel essay by Douglas Gifford in Part Two. Neil Munro's career path took him on the reverse journey, from Argyll and Inveraray to Glasgow and the Lowlands, but his roots in the Gaelic world lend a peculiar interest and flavour to his treatments of it. Gifford's essay forms a natural companion piece to Alison Lumsden's fresh take on Scott, not only because he likewise argues cogently for hitherto unsuspected depth in a writer's treatment of the Highlands, but specifically because Neil Munro's Highland fiction resonates explicitly with Scott's, for example with the allusions to *Rob Roy* which Munro deploys in his most compelling Highland novel, *The New Road*.

The last essay in each part offers a strikingly different but complementary perspective on an issue emerging from the first essay and explored in the second and third essays. In Part One, the first three essays all offer different challenges to the assumption that perceptions of Highland backwardness, and of a 'Highland/Lowland' divide, must necessarily relate to some fundamental social or cultural reality. The documentary evidence for what this reality may have been, however, is simply not thick enough on the ground for large parts of Gaelic Scotland in this period to enable the contrast between the 'fiction' of perception and the 'facts' of real life to be drawn convincingly. The same does not apply to Tuscany, one of the most document-rich societies of late-medieval Europe. Samuel Cohn Jr shows that 'Lowland' perceptions of the Tuscan 'Highlands' could be even more vicious than we find in any Scottish source, even in the

case of an eye-witness account. He demonstrates, however, that scholars who take the trouble to examine the copious material in the archives are handsomely rewarded by the discovery of a picture of 'Highland' society wholly at odds with contemporary literary depictions of economic and religious backwardness, depictions which until now have been read at face value.

In Part Two, the simultaneous tendency to emphasise and denigrate the exploitation of the 'Highlands' as a core element of 'Lowland' identity is probed by highlighting how the process of appropriation was itself much more ambiguous than might at first sight be supposed. This is explored by Alison Lumsden and Douglas Gifford by focusing on the work of two major authors. In Ewen Cameron's essay, the main link with this overall theme is with Anne MacLeod's contribution. On one level Anne MacLeod is concerned with how the Highlands provided inspiration for people who had (at best) a limited interest in real Highlanders. At the same time, her essay also shows vividly how the Highlands became significant not so much for Lowlanders and their Scottish identity, as for those from further afield seeking fulfilment of particular aesthetic and philosophical needs. This theme of the enhanced importance of the Highlands not only within Scotland but beyond is a central feature of Ewen Cameron's essay, in which he shows how they became a magnet for diverse political interests in the 1880s. He also draws attention to how this was inspired particularly by Highlanders taking the initiative and protesting in a way that was previously regarded as unthinkable. It may have been more as landscape rather than as people that the Highlands had first become embedded in the visual consciousness of many beyond Scotland, but it was as communities taking action—in a manner reminiscent of Cohn's Tuscan Highlanders *ca* 1400—that the Highlands captured the imagination of a wide spectrum of diverse political forces, if only briefly.

Both parts represent re-examinations of the two key elements of the 'Highlands' within today's Scottish identity that have been inherited from the past. The very idea of the espousal of mock-

'Highland' traits would be impossible without some notion of 'Highlands' in the first place. In this historical context the 'Highlands' are revealed, even more acutely than has previously been supposed, to be a mental construct of those who identify 'Highlanders' as 'others', and who, in a Scottish context, see themselves as 'Lowlanders'.

In a book addressing Lowland perceptions, it might have been assumed that the place of Gaels within this process, and their attitudes towards it, would be unlikely to feature much beyond the title's Gaelic component. In fact, it may be indicative of the more rounded account hopefully offered here that liminal and mediating figures with Gaelic credentials put in a number of appearances. John Murdoch is the outstanding example among several in Ewen Cameron's essay, and to him and Neil Munro we could add James Macpherson, George Buchanan, Walter Kennedy, and perhaps even the author of the famous Fordun passage itself. Martin Martin, author of the quotation which opened this introduction, is of the same ilk. Even so, the Gaelic perspective could naturally form the subject of a collection of essays in its own right. If so, it is hoped that it will not be based on the notions of the inherent 'division' between 'Highlands' and 'Lowlands', and the enduring 'paradox' of the appropriation of 'Highland' images for Scottish nationhood, that have been challenged in this volume. The 'division' is, first and foremost, a function of the imagination of particular groups in particular contexts, and the 'paradox' is a rich interplay of genuine interaction and self-aware ambiguity. Together they help to make Scottish experience much more engaging and vital than would be true if these essays had been faced instead with challenging a traditional emphasis on superficialities like unity and consistency.

Gaelic Barbarity and Scottish Identity in the Later Middle Ages

MARTIN MACGREGOR

One point of reasonably clear consensus among Scottish historians during the twentieth century was that a 'Highland/Lowland divide' came into being in the second half of the fourteenth century. The *terminus post quem* and lynchpin of their evidence was the following passage from the beginning of Book II chapter 9 in John of Fordun's *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, which they dated variously from the 1360s to the 1390s:¹

The character of the Scots however varies according to the difference in language. For they have two languages, namely the Scottish language (*lingua Scotica*) and the Teutonic language (*lingua Theutonica*). The people who speak the Teutonic language occupy the coastal and lowland regions, while those who speak the Scottish language live in the mountainous regions and outer isles. The coastal people (*maritima gens*) are docile and civilised, trustworthy, long-suffering and courteous, decent in their dress, polite and peaceable, devout in their worship, but always ready to resist injuries threatened by their enemies. The island or mountain people (*insulana sive montana gens*) however are fierce and untameable, uncouth and unpleasant, much given to theft, fond of doing nothing, but their minds are quick to learn, and cunning. They are strikingly handsome in appearance, but their clothing is unsightly. They are always hostile and savage not only towards the people and language of England, but also towards their fellow Scots (*proprie nationi*) because of the difference in language. They are however loyal and obedient to the

¹*Johannis de Fordun Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. W. F. Skene and trans. Felix J. H. Skene, 2 vols. (Edinburgh 1871–2) [*Chron. Fordun*] i, 42; ii, 38; *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower in *Latin and English*, gen. ed. D. E. R. Watt, 9 vols. (Aberdeen/Edinburgh 1987–98) [*Scotichronicon*] i, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen, 184–7. The translation has been taken from the latter, with amendments to clarify some important points of terminology.

king and kingdom, and they are easily made to submit to the laws, if rule is exerted over them.

Fordun's testimony was accepted at face value, and justified through a panoply of arguments whose most commonly voiced rallying-cry was 'the emergence of the Highlander'.² Since Fordun stood as the fountainhead of a lineage of commentators who basically echoed his refrain for 200 years, it followed that the Highland/Lowland divide remained an ever-present and inescapable reality in Scotland throughout the later middle ages. This way of thinking reached its zenith—or nadir—in a passage in Gordon Donaldson's *Scotland: James V–James VII*.³ Here, the Fordunian strain of evidence was entwined with other elements—a racialist reading of the Scottish past which properly belonged to the nineteenth rather than the later twentieth century; the mindset and empiricism of the institutional historian; and, perhaps, a dash of personal prejudice—to present a late medieval Scotland fissured by apartheid. The Highland Line separated two races, and 'one way of life from another'; the institutions (and, presumably, what they represented) of the Lowlands were almost wholly absent in the Highlands; monarchy and church alone were capable of crossing the divide.

Fordun's text has been often quoted but little studied. It was not until 1994 that serious flaws were pointed out in the English translation in Skene's edition.⁴ Indeed, the account may have achieved an iconic status which almost puts it beyond the reach of

²I. F. Grant, *The Social and Economic Development of Scotland before 1603* (Edinburgh and London 1930), 149–58, 472–8; T. C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People 1560–1830* (Glasgow 1969), 39–46; Jane Dawson, 'The Gaidhealtachd and the emergence of the Scottish Highlands', in *British Consciousness and Identity: The making of Britain, 1533–1707*, edd. B. Bradshaw and P. Roberts (Cambridge 1998), 259–300.

³Gordon Donaldson, *Scotland: James V–James VII* (1965; Edinburgh 1990), 3–4.

⁴Alexander Grant, 'Aspects of national consciousness in medieval Scotland', in *Nations, Nationalism and Patriotism in the European Past*, edd. Claus Bjørn, Alexander Grant, and Keith J. Stringer (Copenhagen 1994), 68–95, at 76–7.

critical scrutiny. Despite assembling a body of evidence at odds with the stark and simple opposites that predominate in Fordun, Geoffrey Barrow nevertheless felt compelled to acknowledge the latter's version as the product of 'first-hand testimony', seeking to represent things as they were.⁵

The argument advanced below that this passage may have been written in (or before) 1285⁶ means that henceforth we shall refer to its author as 'Fordun', and represents one way of questioning to what extent it is rooted in 'first-hand testimony'. If the later fourteenth century seems remarkably early for the existence of a sharply etched and fully fledged Highland/Lowland dichotomy, what price the later thirteenth century? Another is to contextualise the passage by considering what immediately follows it, and constitutes the rest of Chapter 9:⁷

Solinus the historian in describing the character of the ancient people of the Scots says:

The Scottish people were always rough and warlike with barbaric customs. For when baby boys were born to them, their fathers followed the practice of offering their first food to them on the point of a spear, so that they would wish for no other death than to die in battle fighting for freedom. And when they grow up and are skilled in fighting, they celebrate a victory first of all by drinking the blood of those slain, and then smearing it over their faces. They are a noble people, frugal in food, savage of spirit, fierce and stern in expression and rough in speech. They are however courteous and kind to their own countrymen, devoted to games and hunting, preferring leisure to work.

Isidore says:

⁵G. W. S. Barrow, 'The lost Gàidhealtachd of medieval Scotland', in *Gaelic and Scotland: Alba agus A' Ghàidhlig*, ed. William Gillies (Edinburgh 1989), 67–88, at 79.

⁶See chapter 2, at 000

⁷*Chron. Fordun* i, 42; ii, 38; *Scotichronicon* i, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen, 184–7.

The Scottish people are in origin the same people that were formerly in Ireland, and resemble them in everything including language, customs and character. They are a fickle people, haughty in spirit, fierce towards their enemies, almost always preferring death to enslavement, regarding dying in bed as cowardice, but thinking it glorious and manly to kill or be killed on the battlefield by their enemies, a people with a frugal way of life, able to endure hunger for a long time, and seldom indulging in food before sunset. They are content with meat and dairy produce, and although for the most part they are by nature a people of handsome appearance and fairness of face, their appearance is largely spoiled by their characteristic dress.

To my knowledge this section has been coupled with its illustrious sibling by only one modern historian.⁸ The reluctance of others to follow suit may stem from their desire to present 'Fordun' as a contemporary analyst of the social realities of later fourteenth-century Scotland. Isidore, the seventh-century bishop of Seville, and Solinus, the third-century early Christian encyclopaedist, might appear unlikely authorities to be invoked as prime witnesses by such an analyst. Yet that 'Fordun' is seriously engaging with them is made instantly clear by the substantive points of contact between their accounts and his: innate physical attractiveness undermined by slovenly apparel (*deformis/deformat*); delight in leisure and idleness (*ocium/ocio*); wildness of disposition and behaviour bordering on the inhuman (*ferina gens/inhumano ritu/gens saeva/gens ... animo ferox*); the stylistic device, borrowed from Solinus, of an upbeat conclusion (*tamen ... fidelis et obediens/tamen affabilis et benigna*). It follows that Fordun's meaning can only be elucidated by investigating the nature of that engagement more fully.

Professor Smout and others have noted that even though this is the earliest developed account of late-medieval Lowland attitudes to

⁸Edward J. Cowan, 'The discovery of the Gàidhealtachd in sixteenth century Scotland', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* [TGSi] 60 (1997–8) 259–84, at 262–3.

the 'Highlander', it is already a 'mature example'.⁹ Viewing chapter 9 as a whole, this maturity is not to be wondered at, given that it had been a millennium and more in the making. 'Fordun' is consciously identifying himself with the time-honoured and universal topos of civilised versus barbaric man, specifically as it had been applied to Celtic-speaking peoples since classical antiquity.¹⁰ That he and those who came after him were able to draw upon a fully fledged tradition and a portfolio of developed motifs, complicates our efforts to understand the relationship between what they say and the *actualité* of late-medieval Scotland. If most or all of the raw material they required was readily available to them on the literary shelf, then it would not be difficult to reconfigure the template to meet their own agenda, which in itself might of course be influenced by a multiplicity of factors such as personal experience, political affiliation, philosophical orientation, and literary intent. Hence it would be wrong-headed to view shifts within this body of evidence as necessarily and exclusively synchronised to real changes taking place on the ground. For instance, the endurance and dietary moderation of the *primeva Scotorum gens*, noted in Solinus and strongly emphasised in Isidore, is shrunk by 'Fordun' to the single descriptor *paciens*, which he applies to his *gens maritima*. Yet Hector Boece was happy to look back beyond Fordun to earlier models, ultimately Livy, and not only resurrected this trait in spectacular style, but also associated it primarily with the Gaelic Scots of his own time. The expansion and contraction of the significance of the topos, and its ability to change sides, invite explanations grounded elsewhere than in shifting patterns of frugality among ancient, medieval or late-medieval Scots.

The vision of the Scottish literati, then, had elsewhere its origin, and was in the first instance a product not of the map but of the

⁹Smout, *History of the Scottish People*, 40. Cf. Alexander Grant, *Independence and Nationhood: Scotland 1306-1469* (London 1984), 200-1; Dawson, 'Gaidhealtachd', 284-5.

¹⁰See in general W. R. Jones, 'The image of the barbarian in medieval Europe', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13 (1971) 376-407.

mind, rooted in the primal human urge to assert difference and superiority. Its subsequent crude imposition upon the Scottish landscape inevitably resulted in the sort of topographical anomalies noted by Geoffrey Barrow.¹¹ However, it would be anachronistic of us to dismiss the Lowland literati as the inhabitants of a continuum of cultural stereotyping which debarred them from engaging with their own times, or to look to them for the sort of precise and literal truths which would have required them to be out pacing the late-medieval Scottish landscape, map in one hand and socio-linguistic questionnaire in the other. Within the conventions of their own historiographical tradition, it would be perfectly possible to make the contemporary scene, in terms of either perceptions or actualities, a criterion—though only one—for the invocation of the stereotype *per se*, and for the particular form of its invocation. Indeed the very longevity and ubiquity of the stereotype may have furnished a palette of established motifs extensive enough to endow the identikit portrait with a degree of finesse and individuality.

Viewed in its entirety, Book II Chapter 9 of *Chronica Gentis Scotorum* becomes an outstanding case-study of the process of adaptation.¹² The literary challenge was to create a bi-polar Scotland from undifferentiated source materials. ‘Fordun’ does so by equating *primeva Scotorum gens* with contemporary Gaels, assigning the language and most of the characteristics of the former to the latter. That he has sources for them doubtless dictates why he spends twice as long upon Gaelic Scots: the traits he gives to ‘Teutonic’ Scots may be nothing more than simple reflexes of his own devising. In terms

¹¹Barrow, ‘Lost Gàidhealtachd’, 67.

¹²There is scope for a more detailed analysis than is given here. It is clear that ‘Fordun’ has reworked his sources considerably, a prime reason being to tone down the more negative aspects of their portrayal of the first Scots: *Scotichronicon* i, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen, 341–3. Further complications are the fact that his excerpt from Solinus ‘is based on the interpolated text found in several MSS’, while its conclusion comes from a different but unidentified source (*ibid.* i, 343); and that Isidore is not the author of the passage attributed to him (see below, pp. 13–14). The treatment of sources in chapter 9 might also be compared to the discussion of topography and land use in Highlands and Lowlands in chapter 8: *ibid.* i, 341–2.

of specifics, he seems to have directed a preliminary editorial strike against the passage he cites from Solinus, deleting from it a 'strong suggestion of pagan beliefs and practices'.¹³ Presumably this is explained by his overall strategic aim of championing the Scots as early and consistently orthodox adherents of Roman Christianity,¹⁴ although a trace of Solinus may resurface in the contrast silently implied by the reference to the *gens maritima* as 'devout in their worship'. Endurance, as we saw, goes to 'Teutonic' Scots. Where ancient Scots were friendly to one another, Gaelic Scots are now hostile to 'Teutonic' Scots. Finally, there are in his treatment of Gaelic Scots touches unknown to his stated sources, perhaps therefore attributable to 'Fordun' or indeed Fordun himself: propensity for plunder; mental agility and cunning; the striking emphasis upon fidelity to king, kingdom and law if governed effectively,¹⁵ and a linguistic and ethnic 'nationalism' which sees him refuse to refer to the speech of 'Teutonic' Scots as English, and accept that the *gens maritima* and *gens montana*, for all their differences, together form *nacio Scotorum*.¹⁶

Whatever the motives which induced 'Fordun' to formulate the stereotype precisely as he did, it could certainly be argued that by invoking it at all he sought to assert a fundamental truth, a momentous shift which he observed in his Scottish present,

¹³*Ibid.* i, 343.

¹⁴William Ferguson, *The Identity of the Scottish Nation: An Historic Quest* (Edinburgh 1998), 98–105; Roger A. Mason, 'Civil society and the Celts: Hector Boece, George Buchanan and the ancient Scottish past', in *Scottish History: The Power of the Past*, edd. Edward J. Cowan and Richard J. Finlay (Edinburgh 2002), 95–119, at 112–13. Paganism lost its force as a marker of barbarity within the Christian Europe of the central middle ages, and was superseded by a greater emphasis upon moral, social and cultural distinctions: 'the condescension of some Europeans towards others who seemed less advanced or refined'. Jones, 'Image of the barbarian', 394.

¹⁵For arguments relating this to the political context of the later fourteenth century, see Stephen Boardman, *The Early Stewart Kings: Robert II and Robert III 1371–1406* (East Linton 1996), 4 and n. 13, 6, 8 and n. 37, 21 and n. 108, 86–8.

¹⁶For arguments relating this to 'the realities of fourteenth-century Scotland', see Grant, 'Aspects of national consciousness', 77.

whenever that may have been. ‘Fordun’ posits a continuity between past and present which is to our eyes dramatic, but also—and this must have been what truly mattered to him—partial. He presents the *gens montana* of the Scottish present as the living remnant of how all Scots had been in the time of Solinus or Isidore. It follows that he would have been surprised to learn that future historians would use his account as the basis for arguments about ‘the emergence of the Highlander’. For him what counted was the ‘emergence of the Lowlander’: what was new was that some Scots (*gens maritima*) had changed their language, and thereby moved on and ‘got civility’. It is a moot point whether this stasis of the Gaels in Scotland was for ‘Fordun’ a genuine state of affairs flowing inevitably from continuity of language, or rather a convenient rhetorical benchmark. It may be noted that, in their ability to learn, and to respond to good rule, he endows them with the potential for change. Nevertheless, the *gens montana* becomes a monolith by which the progress of the *gens maritima* can be measured. In both his account and those of his models, the assertion of superiority emanates from the side of those who believe themselves to possess or have acquired it, through civility.

The most recent editors of Book II Chapter 9 note that the passage which ‘Fordun’ there ascribes to Isidore is actually taken from Bartholomaeus Anglicus, ‘Bartholomew the Englishman’, the Franciscan whose highly influential encyclopedia, *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, was completed *ca* 1245.¹⁷ Further investigation suggests that Bartholomew’s influence upon ‘Fordun’ did not end there.¹⁸ He

¹⁷*Scotichronicon* i, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen, 341–3; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edd. H.C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 61 vols. (Oxford 2004) iv, 161–2.

¹⁸For first pointing this out, and discussing Bartholomew’s influence upon ‘Fordun’ with me, I am much indebted to Dr Dauvit Broun; see further chapter 2. In his description of Scotland in *De regionibus*, the famous Book XV of his encyclopedia, Bartholomew begins with the passage which ‘Fordun’ has borrowed but attributed to Isidore. As with the passage he ascribes to Solinus, ‘Fordun’ seems to have made changes designed to reduce the severity of the strictures on the first Scots; *Scotichronicon* i, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen, 343. Bartholomew

continues:¹⁹

But in the present time many Scots have changed the manners of the original race in considerable measure and for the better, as a result of intermixture with the English. However the wood-dwelling Scots (*silvestres Scoti*) and the Irish take pride in following in the footsteps of their fathers in dress, language, sustenance and other habits. Indeed in a sense they reject the ways of others in preference to their own.

Here surely resides the genesis of Book II Chapter 9, and confirmation of its true meaning, long obscured by alterations 'Fordun' has made. He has dislocated Bartholomew's straightforward sequentialism and logic both by reversing the chronology, moving from the present, much elaborated, to the past; and by expunging Bartholomew's explanation for the distinction between past and present, English influence. This is consistent with the 'nationalist' sensibility already adumbrated, and is a point to which we shall return.

Analysis of 'Fordun' has served to generate some ground rules which I now propose to apply to the views held by other late-medieval Lowland Scottish literati towards Gaelic Scots down to the end of the

then has a sentence about the Scots' propensity for painting and decorating their bodies, and cites Isidore, correctly, as his authority. 'Fordun' omits it, but may have assumed that Isidore was the source, not of this last sentence alone, but of all that had appeared in Bartholomew's account of Scotland thus far; hence the false attribution to Isidore. Bartholomew then gives the passage cited in the next note.

¹⁹*Mores autem primeve gentis multi ex eis ex admixtione cum anglicis in maxima parte his temporibus in melius mutaverunt. Silvestres tamen Scoti et Hybernici in habitu et in lingua et in victu et in aliis moribus paterna sequi vestigia gloriam arbitrantur. Immo aliorum consuetudines respectu suarum quodammodo aspernantur.* I have consulted the early printed edition by Berthold Ruppel (Basel 1472×80), checked against two manuscripts held in Glasgow University Library, Special Collections, MS Hunter 389, and MS Hunter 391. For an English version see *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum: A Critical Text*, edd. M. C. Seymour *et al.*, 3 vols. (Oxford 1975–88) ii, 812–13.

sixteenth century.²⁰ The principal figures to be considered are Wyntoun, Bower, Holland, Blind Harry, Dunbar, Mair, Boece, Leslie, Buchanan and Montgomerie.²¹ While much of this material is, like the 'Fordun' text, familiar through citation, scope still exists for a more systematic analysis, as a contribution to the clutch of recent

²⁰The scope of this discussion largely excludes perceptions recoverable from the writings of English and continental commentators and the records of central government, as well as those emanating from the Gaelic side; and the issue of how far the literati's views can be held to be representative of Lowland society as a whole.

²¹In the following editions: Andrew of Wyntoun, *The Originale Cronykil of Scotland*, ed. D. Laing, 3 vols. (Edinburgh 1872–9) [Wyntoun, *Originale Cronykil*]; *Scotichronicon*, gen. ed. Watt; *Longer Scottish Poems I: 1375–1650*, ed. Priscilla Bawcutt and Felicity Riddy (Edinburgh 1987) [*Longer Scottish Poems I*, ed. Bawcutt and Riddy]; *Hary's Wallace*, ed. Matthew P. McDiarmid, 2 vols. (Scottish Text Society: Edinburgh and London 1968–9) [*Hary's Wallace*, ed. McDiarmid]; *The Poems of William Dunbar*, ed. Priscilla Bawcutt, 2 vols. (Glasgow 1998) [*Dunbar*, ed. Bawcutt]; Ioannes Maior, *Historia Maioris Britanniae, tam Anglie quam Scotie* (Paris 1521) [Mair, *Historia*]; John Mair, *A History of Greater Britain, as well England as Scotland*, ed. and trans. Archibald Constable (Scottish History Society: Edinburgh 1892) [Mair, *History*]; Hector Boece, *Scotorum Historiae a Prima Gentis Origine* (Paris 1527) [Boece, *Scotorum Historiae*]; *The History and Chronicles of Scotland: written in Latin by Hector Boece, canon of Aberdeen; and translated by John Bellenden*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh 1821) [Boece, *History*]; *De Origine, Moribus, et Rebus Gestis Scotorum Libri Decem ... Authore Ioanne Leslaeo, Scoto, Episcopo Rossensi* (Rome 1578) [Leslie, *De Origine*]; John Lesley, *The History of Scotland from the death of King James I in the year 1436 to the year 1561*, ed. Thomas Thomson (Bannatyne Club: Edinburgh 1830) [Lesley, *History*]; *The Historie of Scotland written first in Latin by the most reverend and worthy Jhone Leslie, Bishop of Rosse, and translated in Scottish by Father James Dalrymple*, ed. E. G. Cody and William Murison, 2 vols. (Scottish Text Society: Edinburgh 1888–95) [Leslie, *Historie*]; *Rerum Scoticarum Historia Avctore Georgio Buchanano Scoto* (Edinburgh 1582) [Buchanan, *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*]; George Buchanan, *The History of Scotland*, trans. James Aikman, 4 vols. (Glasgow and Edinburgh 1827–9) [Buchanan, *History*]; *The Cherrie and the Slae by Alexander Montgomerie*, ed. H. Harvey Wood (London 1937) [*The Cherrie and the Slae*, ed. Wood]; *The Poems of Alexander Montgomerie*, ed. James Cranstoun and George Stevenson, 2 vols. (Scottish Text Society: Edinburgh and London 1887 and 1910) [*Poems of Alexander Montgomerie*, ed. Cranstoun and Stevenson].

studies of aspects of the corpus.²² The challenge of teasing apart image, reality and motive exemplified by the 'Fordun' text remains as we survey that broader landscape whose most conspicuous landmark it is. For the Scottish historian the challenge is compounded by the lack of the archival resources which enable the historian of late-medieval Tuscany, for example, to subject the behavioural traits assigned by Tuscan literati to their own Highlanders to systematic quantitative analysis, and expose them as cultural and ideological stereotypes pure and simple.²³ The record does afford us ample means to question the existence of a late-medieval Scotland compartmentalised into Lowlands and Highlands by a 'Highland line' that crippled interaction between them.²⁴ Yet it also leaves open plenty room for debate on issues such as the place of the MacDonald Lordship of the Isles within the late-medieval Stewart kingdom;²⁵ with which we could couple the observation that

²²See U. Morét, 'Gaelic History and Culture in Medieval and Sixteenth Century Lowland Scottish Historiography', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Aberdeen 1993); Dawson, 'Gaidhealtachd'; Cowan, 'Discovery of the Gaidhealtachd'; Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, c. 1600–c. 1800* (Cambridge 1999), 123–45; Ulrike Morét, 'Historians and languages: medieval and humanist views of Celtic Britain', in *Freedom and Authority: Scotland c. 1050–c. 1650. Historical and Historiographical Essays presented to Grant G. Simpson*, edd. T. Brotherstone and D. Ditchburn (East Linton 2000), 60–72; Mason, 'Civil society and the Celts'.

²³See chapter 4. For a partial attempt to compare the relative wealth of late-medieval Highlands and Lowlands using tax records and crown rentals, see Ranald G. Nicholson, 'Domesticated Scots and Wild Scots: the relationship between Lowlanders and Highlanders in medieval Scotland', in *Proceedings of the First Colloquium on Scottish Studies* (University of Guelph, Guelph 1968), 1–16, at 6–7.

²⁴See Barrow, 'Lost Gaidhealtachd', for the fourteenth century; and Martin MacGregor, *Gaelic Scotland in the Later Middle Ages* (forthcoming), for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

²⁵John Bannerman, 'The lordship of the Isles', in *Scottish Society in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Jennifer M. Brown (London 1977), 209–40; A. Grant, 'Scotland's "Celtic Fringe" in the late middle ages: the Macdonald Lords of the Isles and the kingdom of Scotland', in *The British Isles, 1100–1500*, ed. R. R. Davies (Edinburgh 1988), 118–41; N. MacDougall, 'Achilles' Heel? The earldom of Ross, the lordship of the Isles, and the

such interaction can readily co-exist with 'failure to establish goodwill or even understanding ... especially perhaps on the political plane. It may be possible for two communities or two nations to enrich each other's cultures significantly, at several levels, and yet to view each other with mutual hostility'.²⁶

In a situation where the limited and contested nature of the evidence inhibits the establishment of independent benchmarks, the only methodological recourse would seem to be internal cross-analysis of the writings of the literati, paying particular attention both to the degree of uniformity, and to the variations, inconsistencies and omissions, which they exhibit. The results can then be further compared with external points of reference such as that of Tuscany. There are three parts to the analysis: firstly, the chief behavioural characteristics assigned to Gaelic Scots; secondly, the terminology used to identify them and their language; and thirdly, a discussion of the possible relationships between these two sets of data.

The literati associate with Gaelic Scots three external characteristics which are inseparable from their behavioural traits. Firstly, the landscape they inhabit is ugly and unattractive. According to Fordun, 'in the upland districts, and along the highlands ... the country is there very hideous, interspersed with moors and marshy fields, muddy and dirty'.²⁷ To Leslie, the Gaels occupy *horridiora regni loca*, or 'the more horrible places of the Realme'.²⁸ Furthermore, the medieval mind could readily associate the northern habitat of the *gens montana* and *Scoti transalpini* with

Stewart kings, 1449–1507', in *Alba: Celtic Scotland in the Middle Ages*, edd. Edward J. Cowan and R. Andrew McDonald (East Linton 2000), 248–75.

²⁶John Macinnes, 'The Gaelic perception of the Lowlands', in *Gaelic and Scotland*, ed. Gillies, 89–100, at 89.

²⁷*Chron. Fordun* i, 41; ii, 37; *Scotichronicon* i, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen, 182–3.

²⁸Leslie, *De Origine*, 53; Leslie, *Historie* i, 86.

evil and devilry. In Dunbar's 'Off Februar the fyiftene nycht', when the Devil calls for a 'heleand padyane':²⁹

Syne ran a feynd to feche Makfadyane
Far northwart in a nuke.

From at least as far back as Aristotle behavioural distinctions had been drawn between the peoples of north and south, whereby the former were seen as naturally stronger, braver and more attractive, and at the same time less cerebral, than the latter, and hence conspicuous for martial prowess and violent conduct. Bower, commenting on conflict in Strathnaver in 1431, says: 'our fellow-Scots across the mountains, living as they do on the border or boundary of the world, experience little of the scorching summer heat or the sun's blaze by which the blood as a friend of nature might be dried up: it is for this reason that, compared with the other nations of the world, they have been found to be naturally more stout-hearted'.³⁰ To John Mair, 'they are not less, but rather much more, prompt to fight, and this, both because they dwell more towards the north, and because, born as they are in the mountains, and dwellers in forests, their very nature is more combative'.³¹

The language of Gaelic Scots is an absolutely critical marker, giving voice to all the key internal characteristics. Both Fordun and Mair—the latter here presumably influenced by the former—begin and end their most detailed discussions of the Gaels with difference in language, seeing this as the root of behavioural distinctions between Highlanders and Lowlanders, and of the hostility of the Gaels to both Lowland Scots and English.³² Bower begins to list the names of the chiefs captured by James I at Inverness in 1428 but

²⁹ *Dunbar*, ed. Bawcutt i, 152.

³⁰ *Scotichronicon* viii, ed. D. E. R. Watt, 266–7. Bower goes on to cite supportive testimony from the *De Re Militari* of Vegetius.

³¹ Mair, *History*, 49; cf. *ibid.*, 32, 40–1, and Arthur H. Williamson, *Scottish National Consciousness in the Age of James VI: The Apocalypse, the Union and the Shaping of Scotland's Public Culture* (Edinburgh 1979), 163–4.

³² *Scotichronicon* i, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen, 184–5; Mair, *History*, 48–50.

then gives up, since the names ‘might engender tedium to a person ignorant of them by reason of their barbarousness’.³³ For Buchanan, the harsh sounds of Gaelic linked it to a primitive phase in Scottish development best left behind: ‘for if, in this transmigration into another language [Latin], it is necessary that we yield up one thing or another, let us pass from rusticity and barbarism to culture and civilisation’.³⁴ In ‘Off Februar the fyiftene nycht’, the cacophonous sound of the Gaels deafens the Devil, prompting him to smoor them ‘in the depest pot of hell’.³⁵ In *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedie*, Dunbar links Gaelic utterance to treachery (‘thy treachour tung hes tane ane Heland strynd’; ‘dissaitful tyrand with serpentis tung vnstable’), blasphemy (‘baird blasphemmer’) and rebellion (‘rebald rymyng’).³⁶ In *The Buke of the Howlat*, and in ‘Ane Anser to Ane Helandmen’s Invective’ attributed to Montgomerie, we see parodies of Gaelic speech, while its perceived harsh sounds result in the regular characterisation of its speakers as rooks, ravens, and perhaps ptarmigans and cormorants.³⁷ Attempts by Gaels to speak Lowland Scots are also targeted: in *The Buke of the Howlat* the bard is mocked for his use of the third person feminine singular, in place of the first person singular, pronoun; in the ‘Flyting’ Dunbar asserts that he can speak better ‘Inglys’ than Kennedy ‘can blabber with thy Carrick lippis’.³⁸

Responses to the Gaels’ appearance exhibit greater variation. Fordun’s faithful repetition of Isidore’s dictum about physical attractiveness spoiled by unsightly dress cuts little ice with Dunbar, who unleashes an unstoppable scatological assault upon Kennedy’s bodily repulsiveness and corruption; ‘Evill farit and dryit, as Densmen on the rattis, Lyk as the gleddis had on thy gulesnowt

³³*Scotichronicon* viii, ed. D. E. R. Watt, 260.

³⁴Buchanan, *History* i, 9.

³⁵*Dunbar*, ed. Bawcutt i, 152.

³⁶*Ibid.* i, 202

³⁷*Longer Scottish Poems I*, edd. Bawcutt and Riddy, 76; *The Cherrie and the Slae*, ed. Wood, 86–9; *Dunbar*, ed. Bawcutt i, 152, 202, 206; ii, 388, 432, 437.

³⁸*Longer Scottish Poems I*, edd. Bawcutt and Riddy, 337; *Dunbar*, ed. Bawcutt i, 204.

dynd ... Laithly and lowsy, als lauchtane as ane leik'. Elsewhere Dunbar represents the Gaels as dressed in 'tag and tatter', and equips Kennedy with a 'polk breik' or meal-bag, 'rilling' or rough hide shoes, and wholly inadequate trousers.³⁹ Much of this is echoed in briefer compass in 'Ane Anser to Ane Helandmanis Invective'.⁴⁰ The perspective of the sixteenth-century historical tradition is very different. Mair has a characteristically sober account of the dress of the Gaels in time of peace and war.⁴¹ Boece, Leslie and Buchanan, who share an approach predicated upon continuity between 'ancient Scots' and the contemporary Highlands, are similarly non-judgmental or positive.⁴² According to Leslie:⁴³

Lykwyse the maner of cleithing and leiving, that ald forme thay unchanget aluterlie have keipet. In this sik a reverend feir and dreid thay have leist thay offend in things of honestie, that gif thair Princes, or of thair Nobilitie, visit the kingis court, thay aray thame selves of a courtlie maner, elegantlie, quhen thay returne to thayr cuntrey, casteng aff al courtlie decore, in al haist, thay cleith thame selves of thair cuntrey maner, excepte thay wil incur al manis danger and havie offence.

Turning to behaviour, five principal traits or stereotypes stand out, some of which find personification or embodiment in archetypes. Arguably most fundamental is barbarity, although the word itself, while occasionally applied to language, is seldom found. Instead the lexicon turns upon wildness, commencing with the *ferina gens* of 'Fordun' and the 'wyld Scottis men' of Wyntoun.⁴⁴ Walter Bower preferred the term used by Bartholomew, *silvestres*, literally 'wood-dwelling', which he uses in tandem with

³⁹ *Ibid.* i, 201–8.

⁴⁰ *The Cherrie and the Slae*, ed. Wood, 86–9.

⁴¹ Mair, *History*, 49–50, 359.

⁴² Boece, *History*, lvi; Leslie, *Historie* i, 93–4; Buchanan, *History* i, 41.

⁴³ Leslie, *Historie* i, 95–6.

⁴⁴ *Chron. Fordun* i, 42; Wyntoun, *Originale Cronykil* iii, 55, 63. For confirmation of wildness as the defining characteristic of Gaelic Scots in the eyes of English and continental observers, see Nicholson, 'Domesticated Scots and Wild Scots', 3–4.

indomabiles, and in contradistinction to *urbani*, *eruditi* and *domestici*. *Silvestres* remained the staple Latin descriptor until at least the later sixteenth century, and it is clear that the connotation of wildness was paramount.⁴⁵ After 1500, however, we encounter some equivocation on this score. In his famous passage on Highlands and Lowlands, Mair claimed that *sylvestres* was how foreigners identified Gaelic Scots, whereas to lowlanders they were simply ‘men of the high land’.⁴⁶ Sensitive to the pejorative flavour of *sylvestres* Mair may have been, yet not sufficiently so to prevent the word coming naturally to him everywhere else in his history.⁴⁷ Leslie’s Latin text of 1578 took the same formal line: to foreigners Gaelic Scots were *feri* and *sylvestres*, but ‘we call them *montani*’.⁴⁸

Their wildness marks out Gaelic Scots as a people apart not merely in the locational sense implied by their northern habitat ‘across the mountains’. They also live beyond civilisation, lacking the understanding of ‘the nature of a civil polity’ possessed by their Lowland counterparts.⁴⁹ Central to their incivility is their attitude to the law. Thus Leslie’s Scots’ text can describe Gaelic Scots as ‘outlawis and wylde peple’,⁵⁰ while in a significant passage Bower broaches the impossibility of achieving legal homogeneity in a Scotland composed of *Scoti sylvestres et urbani*.⁵¹

⁴⁵*Scotichronicon* ii, edd. John and Winifred MacQueen, 422–3; *ibid.* vii, edd. A. B. Scott and D. E. R. Watt, with Ulrike Morét and Norman F. Shead, 360–1. *Silvestres* (*gens silvestra*) is used of the Irish by Gerald of Wales, perhaps following the lead of classical authorities such as Cicero; Jones, ‘Image of the barbarian’, 395–8. For its longevity in the sense of ‘wild’, note the reference in Caithness in 1564 to *hibernica patria inter feros et sylvestres scotos*; *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum*, edd. J. M. Thomson and J. B. Paul, 11 vols. (Edinburgh 1882–1914) [*RMS*] iv, no. 1669.

⁴⁶Mair, *Historia*, Lib. 1, fos. xv^v–xvi^r: *hos altae terrae reliquos ime terrae viros vocamus. Apud exteros priores Scoti sylvestres, posterior res domestica vocantur.*

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, Lib. 1, fo. xii^r; Mair, *History*, 31 nn. 2, 39.

⁴⁸Leslie, *De Origine*, 53.

⁴⁹Mair, *History*, 49.

⁵⁰Leslie, *Historie* i, 85 (final footnote).

⁵¹*Scotichronicon* ii, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen, 422–3.

No law can be established except by the unanimous will of some nation (*gens*), because a nation which is on the one hand impious in itself and on the other mixed (that is derived from different and diverse kinds) will never agree in establishing law, because, just as they are by nature composed of different varieties, so also will they be diverse in their wishes. And on that account it is very difficult for a very mixed nation of different blood (*gens multum commixta de diverso sanguine*) say composed of Scots and English or of country and town Scots (*de silvestribus Scotis et urbanis*) to agree on establishing anything or observing it in practice, because in such a community a man loves himself and no-one loves his country (*republicam*) ...

Gaelic Scots' natural propensity for violence, whether amongst themselves or against others, is a prominent theme. For Mair, 'they are full of mutual dissensions, and war rather than peace is their normal condition'.⁵² Violence as a preferred solution has roots in linguistic intolerance and northern locale, but is doubtless also a condition of incivility, particularly the status of Highlanders as a people beyond the law; and linked to a predisposition to theft and plunder. In the Lowland lexicon the term which came to epitomise Highland violence was 'cateran', and responsibility for this would seem to rest squarely with Walter Bower, who uses it as a synonym for 'Highlander', giving a lead to such as Dunbar in the *Flyting*.⁵³

Equally ubiquitous, though subject to greater variety of interpretation, is the theme of Highlander as rebel and traitor, which almost comes to serve as a litmus test by which the calibre of individual Stewart monarchs is ultimately judged. Fordun's positivist dictum that 'they are however loyal and obedient to the king and kingdom, and they are easily made to submit to the laws, if rule is exerted over them'—which has been taken as a thumbs down to

⁵²Mair, *History*, 49.

⁵³*Scotichronicon* i, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen, 48–9: *ac etiam inter Scotos transalpinos et silvestres quos catervanos seo ketheranos vocamus*, vii, edd. A. B. Scott and D. E. R. Watt, with Ulrike Morét and Norman F. Shead, 359–61: *catervani silvestres, transmontani et insulani*; Dunbar, ed. Bawcutt i, 205.

Robert II's Highland policy⁵⁴—has its polarity rudely reversed by Bower, for whom Gaelic Scots 'appeared always to be almost untameable and rebels against the kings and law-makers of Scotland'. Thus it was David II's crowning achievement that 'he united to their fatherland by means of one legal contract Scots speaking different tongues, both the wild caterans and the domesticated men with skills'.⁵⁵ For Bower, rebellion and barbarity are united by his preoccupation with the law: those who are beyond the law will break it, and demonstrate lack of respect for it through rebellion. More mixed in its messages is Leslie's analysis of the breakdown of order in the Highlands after the death of James V:⁵⁶

Heir is to be considerate the wyld, unquiet and unstabill natour of the Irichemen duelling in the Hielandis and Ilis of Scotteland, who was als obedient to the lawis of the realme, and kepit als gret quietnes in thair cuntreis, with ressonabill justice as in ony uther pairt of the Law landis, so lang as King James the fyfte was on lyf; bot not long eftir his death, thay hering of the unquiet stait of the realme, the gret devisione nourished amangis syndre factions of the nobilitie, the hoit warris and persuit of Inglande maid thame incontinent foryetfull of thair naturall deuotie, and to returne to thair former wiked behaveour, and exercising thame selffis in raising, steling and oppressione of thair nyghbouris in all partis of the Hieland cuntreis, and in the Law landis nixt adjacent unto thame.

Leslie's line may represent a softening in a fifteenth-century view, already running strong in Bower, which peaks around 1500, and sees the rebel assume the deeper and darker hue of the traitor, and receive two developed portrayals as such in the poetry of Blind Harry and William Dunbar. Makfadyan(e), the fictional traitor and opponent of Wallace, is in part modelled on Eoin Lord of the Isles.⁵⁷

⁵⁴Boardman, *The Early Stewart Kings*, 86–8.

⁵⁵*Scotichronicon* vii, edd. A. B. Scott and D. E. R. Watt, with Ulrike Morét and Norman F. Shead, 359–61.

⁵⁶Lesley, *History*, 183.

⁵⁷*Harry's Wallace*, ed. McDiarmid i, 157–64; ii, 206–10; Stephen I. Boardman, '“Pillars of the Community”: Clan Campbell and architectural patronage in the fifteenth

Dunbar's Donald Owre, subject of 'In vice most vicius he excellis', is usually equated with Eoin's grandson and the contemporary claimant for the headship of the Lordship, Dòmhnall Dubh.⁵⁸

Horrible to natour
Is ane tratour,
As feind in fratour
Vundir a cowle.

Treachery derives from wickedness, a consistent element in the portrayal from Wyntoun's 'wyked Heland men' to the 'wiked behaviour' of Leslie's Gaelic Scots, 'exercing thame selffis in raissing, steling and oppreSSIONe',⁵⁹ and pervasive of thought and word as much as deed. To Bower, their 'hearts [are] full of deceit and wickedness'. From the mouth of the bard in *The Buke of the Howlat* come lies, curses, satire; to Dunbar, Kennedy is a 'baird blasphemar'. To Mair, Highlanders are 'ever prone to do evil rather than good'.⁶⁰ The archetype is again Makfadyan(e), but this time as invoked by Dunbar rather than Blind Harry, in a set piece explicitly linking the Gaels to devilry, as the master of ceremonies who orchestrates the Highland pageant in Hell in 'Off Februar the fyiftene nycht'.⁶¹

Finally, and most pervasive of all, is the Gael as man of leisure and 'subsidy junkie'. Craving a life of ease, and having no desire to work, he supports himself by living off others, if necessary through means which contribute to all other aspects of his characterisation:

century', in *Lordship and Architecture in Medieval and Renaissance Scotland*, edd. Richard D. Oram and Geoffrey P. Stell (Edinburgh 2005), 123–59, at 141–3. Cf. the letter cited by Boece stating that James III, 'while still a mere boy ... subdued the Highlanders, a fierce race, ever delighting in intestine feuds and sedition'; *Hectoris Boetii Murthlacensium et Aberdonensium Episcoporum Vitae*, ed. James Moir (New Spalding Club: Aberdeen 1894), 73.

⁵⁸ *Dunbar*, ed. Bawcutt i, 111–12; ii, 348–9, 388.

⁵⁹ Wyntoun, *Originale Cronykil* iii, 55; Lesley, *History*, 183.

⁶⁰ *Scotichronicon* i, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen, 46–7; *Longer Scottish Poems I*, edd. Bawcutt and Riddy, 76–7; *Dunbar*, ed. Bawcutt i, 202; Mair, *History*, 358.

⁶¹ *Dunbar*, ed. Bawcutt i, 152.

violence, deceit, falsehood and corruption. *How the First Helandman of God was Made*, attributed to Montgomerie, argues that the desire to steal as a means of avoiding labour is an instinct which kicks in at birth: “‘Sa lang as I may geir get will I nevir wirk’”.⁶² ‘Fordun’, following the statement in his source, Solinus, that the original Scots were ‘dedicated to games and hunting and leisure rather than work’, says that the Gael chooses this life because he delights in it;⁶³ and Mair expands upon the theme.⁶⁴

The other part of these people delight in the chase and a life of indolence; their chiefs eagerly follow bad men if only they may not have the need to labour; taking no pains to earn their own livelihood, they live upon others, and follow their ... chief in all evil courses sooner than they will pursue an honest industry.

The personification of Highland indolence is of course the bard, of whom we have developed portrayals in *The Buke of the Howlat* and Dunbar’s *Flyting*.

We can reasonably conclude that over a two hundred year period the Lowland literati of late-medieval Scotland developed and deployed an image of Gaelic Scots which was broadly consistent both in the salient features it depicted, and in its hostile and censorious substance and tone. Homogeneity is cemented by various connective threads running through the canon. Most influential was the Fordunian template, still recognisable in John Mair and, as mediated by Mair, in John Leslie; while Hector Boece’s account of *Scotorum prisca et recentia mores*, ‘the new Maneris and the auld of Scottis’, reconfigured that template for the sixteenth-century historians. On the poetic side, the ‘flyting’ offered a vehicle tailor-made for altercations across the Highland line. ‘Ane Anser to Ane Helandmen’s Invective’ evokes *The Buke of the Howlat* in its use of linguistic parody, and indeed borrows a line of pseudo-genealogy

⁶²*Poems of Alexander Montgomerie*, edd. Cranstoun and Stevenson i, 280–1.

⁶³*Scotichronicon* i, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen, 184–7.

⁶⁴Mair, *History*, 49; cf. *ibid.*, 359.

from it. The ubiquitous Makfadyan(e) surfaces here, as in Blind Harry and Dunbar.

The coherence of the late-medieval image also stands out when it is set beside its post-1600 incarnations. The omission or downplaying of traits which come to prominence then suggests that it was capable of bearing the impress of its own era. Emphasis upon clans or kinship, or the despotism of clanship, is negligible, and this could readily be explained by the general significance of kinship, and the existence of broadly similar forms of lordship, across late-medieval Scotland.⁶⁵ Only in Dunbar's *Flyting* is Gaelic poverty prominent, or advanced as an alternative root cause of the parasitic lifestyle, and this would bear out the known late-medieval view, from 'Fordun' onwards, that emphasised the natural wealth and potential productivity of the Highlands.⁶⁶ Other omissions and skewings applied with regularity are rather concerned to distort an understanding of the contemporary Gàidhealtachd which at times is clearly respectable, in the interests of formulating a stereotype. Most glaring is gender, for the portrait drawn by the literati is almost

⁶⁵Cf. *Clan Campbell Letters 1559–1583*, ed. Jane E. A. Dawson (Scottish History Society: Edinburgh 1997), 9. On kinship, see the spurious pedigree perhaps vaunted by the rook-bard in *The Buke of the Howlat*, and which contributes to the bathos of his characterisation; *Longer Scottish Poems I*, edd. Bawcutt and Riddy, 76, 337. For Walter Kennedy's use of kinship to undermine Dunbar, see *Dunbar*, ed. Bawcutt i, 208–9; ii, 428. The writer with most to say on clanship, and on clanship and servitude, is John Mair. 'There is kinship of blood among these tribes; their possessions are few, but they follow one chief as leader of the whole family, and bring with them all their relations and dependants'. Of the chiefs imprisoned by James I at Inverness, he says: 'those men, all low-born as they were, held in utter subjection some seventy or eighty thousand others; and in their own particular tracts they were regarded as princes, and had all at their own arbitrary will, evincing not the smallest regard for the dictates of reason'. Mair, *History*, 358–9. Cf. Leslie, *Historie* i, 96: 'naturallie thay ar bent mair willinglie and vehementlie, gif thair maistir commande thame, to seditione and stryfe ...'.

⁶⁶*Dunbar*, ed. Bawcutt i, 205.

purely masculine.⁶⁷ Prominent social characteristics such as militarism and hospitality, to cite the two most obvious examples, are inflated and simplified to become crude universals, so that all Gaels are presented as caterans and parasites. Linguistically, this involves what were technical terms in the Gaelic context being stripped of these meanings on being borrowed into Scots, and applied pejoratively and indiscriminately, as with *bard* and *cateran*.⁶⁸ Cross-comparison within the corpus itself exposes one instance of exaggeration in the cause of caricature. The *cateran*, to Walter Bower simply a synonym for Highlander, is to John Mair 'the wildest and most lawless of the Highlanders'.⁶⁹

Homogeneity allied to fundamental negativism might suggest that this phenomenon arose from one root impulse or 'big idea'. Such a case can be made, yet needs to be informed from the outset by a spirit of scepticism and constraint. It will not do to envisage those who followed 'Fordun' as self-consciously and single-mindedly harnessing the topos of Celtic primitivism to serve a solemn ideological project; to reduce their perceptions to pit-stops upon a highroad leading with teleological inexorability to *Basilikon Doron* and the Highland policies of James VI. The need for scepticism is a consequence partly, we shall argue, of the nature of the root impulse itself, and partly of the tradition upon which the literati drew, whose very deep-rootedness rendered it highly malleable. An alternative reading of their invocation of that tradition would emphasise how it could be deployed in a variety of guises, even against itself, to further other authorial objectives; the new departures, and significant variations and fluctuations in substance and tone; the undercurrent of sympathy and understanding.

Dunbar's poetry offers a case study of variation in microcosm. The tone moves from the high moral sententiousness of 'In vice most

⁶⁷Marginal exceptions are sundry comments by Boece, Leslie's on dress, and Dunbar's on Kennedy's woman in the *Flyting*. Boece, *History*, lvi–lviii; Leslie, *Historie* i, 94; *Dunbar*, ed. Bawcutt ii, 435–6.

⁶⁸*Ibid.* ii, 428.

⁶⁹Mair, *History*, 362.

vicius he excellis' to the range of comic effects in 'Off Februar the fyiftene nycht' and *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedie*—the last described as 'iocound and mirrie' in one of the manuscript sources.⁷⁰ For Dunbar the image of the Highlander can become a means to achieve other ends. 'In vice most vicius he excellis' is a high political piece, seeking to influence the king over the granting of remissions. *The Flyting* depends for its effect upon the fact that Walter Kennedy—learned, landed, multilingual, courtly and urbane—is the walking antithesis of everything that the stereotype says he should be.⁷¹ Anticipating Scott and others 300 years later, Dunbar plays with the stereotype's familiarity to interrogate and subvert it. There may also be a distinction in flavour to be drawn here between the chronicle and verse traditions.⁷² Their contrasting approach to costume has been noted, and one wonders whether the flytings of Dunbar and Montgomerie(?) were echoing or drawing upon a seam of Lowland perceptions already well-established at a genuinely demotic level, and which owed more to ritualistic ribaldry and the burlesque—acted out, perhaps, as a part of the street life of many a late-medieval burgh—than they did to *saeva indignatio*.⁷³

1500, the time around which Dunbar was writing, seems to be a pivotal point in the development of the genre. Thereafter, the naked antagonism which characterises Wyntoun, Bower and Blind Harry

⁷⁰*Dunbar*, ed. Bawcutt ii, 428.

⁷¹*Ibid.* ii, 427–8. Cf. Priscilla Bawcutt, 'The art of Flyting', *Scottish Literary Journal* 10 (1983) 5–24, at 18–19.

⁷²Although space precludes exploration of the question here, a similar distinction may exist between on the one hand the Latin texts of Boece and Leslie, and on the other the Scots versions by Bellenden and Dalrymple, which in places seem more in tune with the vernacular verse tradition.

⁷³In 1574 parliament legislated that 'na Irische and hieland bairdis and beggaris be brocht and ressavit in the lawland be boittis or vtherwayis', while those already resident were to be deported: *The Acts of the Parliament of Scotland*, edd. T. Thomson and C. Innes, 12 vols. (Edinburgh 1814–75) [APS] iii, 89. This was the latest in a string of measures against itinerants stretching back to 1449, although the act of that year concentrated its fire on 'ony that makis thaim fulis that ar nocht bardis'; *ibid.* ii, 36.

in particular lessens perceptibly. In its wake come treatments which are cooler, detached, even abstract; and which, if still essentially condemnatory, nevertheless resurrect the willingness of 'Fordun' to acknowledge positive traits. It is with the rhetoric of the reign of James VI that undiluted rancour returns.⁷⁴ Such a trajectory for Lowland perceptions can be demonstrated in the apparent fading of the motif of Gaelic Scot as traitor, *ca* 1500; in some aspects of the sixteenth-century construct of Gaelic Scot as ancient Scot; and by contrasting the stances of Walter Bower and John Mair. The latter has been construed as a voice of unmitigated hostility,⁷⁵ yet when set beside Bower he emerges as the soul of discrimination and objectivity. Mair attempts to revise Bower's usage of *silvestres*, and dissents from his definition of 'cateran'. He can identify an element of the 'Wild Scots' who 'yield more willing obedience to the courts of law and the king', even if it is only to safeguard their property. He acknowledges their musical prowess, and can state that 'at the present day almost the half of Scotland speaks the Irish [Gaelic] tongue, and not so long ago it was spoken by the majority of us'. On what has become a yardstick for the prejudices of generations of historians, the outcome of the battle of Harlaw, Mair is scrupulously non-committal.⁷⁶

Hector Boece's *Scotorum Historiae*, and Bellenden's Scots version, followed hard on the heels of Mair, but marked a new departure. The route hinted at in 'Fordun' does not quite reach explicit fulfilment, but comes close enough to stand as the first sustained exploration of the idea that within contemporary Scotland,

⁷⁴For different interpretations, see Arthur H. Williamson, 'Scots, Indians and Empire: the Scottish politics of civilisation 1519–1609', *Past and Present* 150 (1996) 46–83, at 59–62; and Mason, 'Civil society and the Celts', 95. The view offered here holds elements in common with Cowan, 'Discovery of the Gàidhealtachd', esp. 263 and 282, n. 8, but differs in its estimation of both the extent and nature of the sixteenth-century 'rapprochement'.

⁷⁵Williamson, 'Scots, Indians and Empire', 61; Roger A. Mason, *Kingship and the Commonweal: Political Thought in Renaissance and Reformation Scotland* (East Linton 1998), 53–5; Mason, 'Civil society and the Celts', 103–4.

⁷⁶Mair, *History*, 48–50, 362.

the Gaels retained characteristics and practices now lost to the Lowlands.⁷⁷ Moreover, Boece's dissatisfaction with 'the corruptit maneris of the warld now present' contributed to a very different vision: humanist, Livian, patriotic and seemingly, as far as Gaelic Scots were concerned, unequivocally positivist. When he says that, 'in sindry partis of this realme, remanis yit the futsteppis of mony auld virtewis usit sum time amang our eldaris', it is clear that he has in mind particularly Gaelic Scots, whom relative isolation has kept 'nocht corruptit, nor mingit with uncouth blude'. Their temperance—the fontane of all virtew—and ingenuity—expounding upon the *docilis* of 'Fordun'—made the Gaels moral exemplars who could act as the catalyst for national self-renewal.

Boece's thesis left him radically at odds with several by now canonical views. Continuity of language was the root, not of barbarity, but of continuing purity of manners, in stark contrast to the corruption engendered in southern Scots by contact with the English since the time of Malcolm III: 'be frequent and daily cumpany of thaim, we began to rute thair langage and seperflew maneris in oure breistis; throw quhilk the virtew and temperance of our eldaris began to be of litil estimation amang us'.⁷⁸ Nor was there an automatic association between barbarity and latitude:

Thair is na region in the world sa barrant nor unfrutfull, be distance fra the sonne, bot, be providence of God, all maner of necessaryis, to the sustentatioun of man, may be gottin plesandly in it, gif thair war sic pepill that culd laubour it, effering to the nature thair of.

⁷⁷See the views of present-day Gaels in the 'Cosmographe and Discription of Albion', and of 'old Scots' in 'Ane prudent doctrine maid be the Auctore, concerning baith the new Maneris and the auld of Scottis'; and, in the latter, the almost unconscious shift from 'old Scots' to contemporary Gaels and back 'to the maneris of our anciant freindis': Boece, *History*, xxvi, liv–lxii, where all subsequent citations can be found. For the original Latin, which Bellenden follows closely in 'Ane prudent doctrine', but less so in the 'Cosmogrophe', see Boece, *Historiae*, '*Scotorum Regni Descriptio* ...', fo. 5^v; '*De Scotorum priscis recentibusque institutis ac moribus* ...', fos. xviii^v–xx^v.

⁷⁸Cf. Boece, *History*, lix (Boece, *Historiae*, fo. xix^v): 'the Hieland hes baith the writingis and langage as thay had afore, mair ingenius than ony othir pepill'.

The herbal knowledge which underpinned the Gaels' excellence in medicine was, like the *curach* or coracle, symptomatic of rapport with their environment, and facility in adapting it. Their propensity for hunting, so recently condemned by Mair as tantamount to 'a life of indolence', was for Boece precisely the opposite, an essential component of their physical and moral well-being: 'howbeit thay had peace with thair ennimes, thay sufferit nocht thair bodyis to be corruptit with sleuth; bot wer exercit in continewall hunting; for in that game was gret honour amang our eldaris'. Finally, treacherous instincts do not register with Boece, for whom the Gaels 'kepis thair faith and promes with maist severite and constance', just as the old Scots, '[i]n all battallis assailyeit be thaim ... socht nevir victory be treason, falset, nor slicht ... [t]hay held it for gret febilnes to revenge ony displeseir, hatrent, or slauchter, be treason'.

Boece's vision was presumably coloured to some degree by his well-attested personal contacts with the Gaelic world.⁷⁹ In these he was not unique among the literati. The satirical simulations of Gaelic speech in *The Buke of the Howlat* and 'Ane Anser to Ane Helandmen's Invective' both presuppose some degree of understanding of the language, and of attendant cultural and social practices, on the part of sir Richard Holland and (assuming his authorship) Montgomerie.⁸⁰ The effect may smack more of feistiness than po-faced disapproval, but nevertheless does enough to align them with the hostile mainstream of a tradition whose fitful sympathetic undercurrent Boece elevated to an unparalleled high

⁷⁹M. MacGregor, 'The view from Fortingall: the worlds of the *Book of the Dean of Lismore*', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 22 (2006) 35–85, at 68–71.

⁸⁰*Longer Scottish Poems I*, edd. Bawcutt and Riddy, 76, 336–9; *The Cherrie and the Slae*, ed. Wood, 86–9, where 'poik breik' (l. 2) is the 'poc(a) breac' or meal-bag' also found in Dunbar, and for 'cunary' (l. 3) read 'cun(n)art', 'danger'. Montgomerie may have lived in Argyll during his formative years, giving rise to his designation as *eques montanus*, 'the Highland trooper'; and subsequently in Galloway: *Poems of Alexander Montgomerie*, edd. Cranstoun and Stevenson i, xiv–xvii. Prof. Priscilla Bawcutt has pointed out to me that in the *Flyting* between Montgomerie and Polwart, Montgomerie is portrayed as a Highlander, and made the butt of the sort of insults Dunbar applies to Kennedy.

watermark. While John Leslie and George Buchanan both followed his lead in coupling ancient Scots with contemporary Gaels, and indeed did so more explicitly, the motives and outcomes were very different.⁸¹

As is well known, Buchanan saw Gaelic Scotland as a continuum offering evidence of elective succession and conciliar government that contributed significantly to his case for contractual monarchy and the legitimate deposition of the tyrannical ruler. Writing in the shadow of the Reformation, his treatment of religion broke new ground, latching onto the *Céli De* or Culdees of the early Celtic church as a prototype for Scottish presbyterianism. Yet in general Buchanan's attitude is utilitarian and detached. Acknowledgement of virtues such as these inspires no atavistic longing for a wholesale return to the Gaelic past. On the contrary, he endorsed the need for the Gaelic language to die out as part of the transition from 'rusticity and barbarism' to 'culture and civilisation'.⁸²

The relevant section in Leslie takes much of its substance from Boece, but gone is the premise of an effete and debased Lowland present. Instead, Leslie reworks his raw material within an interpretative framework inherited from John Mair, fully accepting of superior Lowland sophistication and political maturity, and conventional in its equation of civility with the south.⁸³

⁸¹Leslie's reworking of Boece is titled, in Dalrymple's Scots version, 'The Ald Scottis Maneris and Present Lykwyse, chieflie of thame quha occupies the Montanis called Hebrides', and includes the following: 'Behaulde now the maneris, with quhilkes the Scottis of ald war induet, bot quhy say I of ald? quhen thay, quha this day with vs speik the ald scottis tounge, planelie have the selfe sam maneris. For quha this day ar, have hithirto keipet the institutionis of thair elderis sa constantlie, that nocht onlie mair than 2 thowsand yeirs thay have keipet the tounge hail vncorrupte; bot lykwyse the maner of cleithing and leiueng, that ald forme thay vnchanget aluterlie have keipit' (Leslie, *Historie* i, 89, 95). For the Latin, see Leslie, *De Origine*, 56, 59. Buchanan's superior linguistic skills enabled him to say that the inhabitants of the Western Isles, 'speak the ancient Gaelic language a little altered' (Buchanan, *History* i, 42).

⁸²Mason, 'Civil society and the Celts', 110–18; Buchanan, *History* i, 9.

⁸³Leslie, *Historie* i, 97; Leslie, *De Origine*, 60.

Lykwyse gif ye behald another, ye and a far bettir parte of the realme ye sal undirstand; thair to be a people, nocht only in tounge bot in habit, eftir the politik maner [*rei politicae ordine*], and in conditiouns and maneris of civilitie thay differ far from that vthir people. For as in speiche thay differ nocht far from thair nyctbouris the Inglise men, in cleithing, evin sa, and leiveng thay differ nocht verie far from tham of Ingland, of France, and of Flandiris ...

The marriage of Boece and Mair generates a degree of tension, even contradiction, but the overall effect is corrective. Many of the elements about which Boece rhapsodised survive, albeit usually in more muted form: ingenuity, artifice, and harmony with nature; moderation of diet, dress and fleshly pleasures (the last more prominent); rejection of idleness and vanity. The quality most emphasised is constancy, both as an absolute, and in the particular spheres of language and manners, to which Leslie, in the wake of the Reformation, and in contrast to Buchanan, can add religion. But here too the tone is guarded, the authorial standpoint sceptical:⁸⁴

Quhilke thing, in sa far, can nocht be laid as a faute to thame, that a certane singular prais of constancie thay appear justlie to have preueinit [surpassed] al naiounis with; thair constancie quhilke this day thay have keipit, is nocht worthie of sobir and slicht prais, chieflie that in the catholik religione far les thay defecte, and far fewar than vthiris of the mair politick sorte amang vs.

Whereas Boece's ancient Scots regarded warfare as a patriotic duty, and a showcase for their virtue and chivalry, Leslie dwells rather on how it was incessant among them, how it governed their dress, their lives during peacetime, and the raising of their children, and how it was fuelled by an unhealthy obsession with revenge, in which 'thay war worthie of al correctione'. He traces continuities with the natural predeliction among modern Gaels for strife and sedition, which is 'to thair commoun weil maist pestilent'; and with their value systems, social structure, and overweening pride: 'thay had levir [rather] be esteimed al nobilis, or at leist balde men of weir,

⁸⁴Leslie, *Historie* i, 96; Leslie, *De Origine*, 60.

albeit nevir sa pure [poor] they war, than housband men, or honest men of crafte, albeit nevir sa rache.⁸⁵

Leslie's conclusion, if somewhat cryptic and compressed, is very revealing.⁸⁶ In effect he issues a health warning about the very activity in which he has been engaging. Some unscrupulous writers have seized upon particular faults of the ancient Scots to blacken not only their character as a whole, but also (so the logic seems to run) that of all modern Scots: 'thay accuse the hail Scottis men'. Leslie counters that this ignores the mixture of vice and virtue inherent in ancient Scots, and that it will not do to tar the contemporary and manifestly superior Lowlands with this brush. Used with discrimination, therefore, the ancient Scot topos can define Lowland progression through Highland stasis, but in the wrong hands, it can have the opposite effect, dragging the Lowlands down. This passage may thus offer a rationale for Leslie's attempted reconciliation of Boece and Mair. Counterpointing Lowland sophistication with Highland barbarity might have its attractions, but the risk that it might rebound upon the former meant it should not be overcooked. Furthermore, an ultimate Gaelic ancestry for all Scots, if reprehensible, was also inescapable. A version of the same dilemma inherent in late-medieval Lowland articulations of Scottish origins⁸⁷ may have been equally relevant to portrayal of manners, and engendered a predisposition not to denude the first Scots, and by extension their present-day Gaelic counterparts, of all virtue.

This was particularly true of religion. The need to assert the historic independence of the Scottish church and its special relationship with Rome meant that those working in the chronicle tradition down to the Reformation, and in Leslie's case beyond, sought to portray ancient Scots and their church as unwaveringly orthodox. The acceptance that Scottish Christianity had been

⁸⁵Leslie, *Historie* i, 90–6; Leslie, *De Origine*, 56–60.

⁸⁶Leslie, *Historie* i, 96–7; Leslie, *De Origine*, 60. Leslie may be taking as a loose model the chapter in which Mair scrutinises charges against the Scots made by earlier writers: Mair, *History*, 40–7.

⁸⁷Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism*, 123–45.

nurtured in a Hebridean cradle brought reflected glory to contemporary Gaels.⁸⁸ Hence the fact that, with the exception of Dunbar's diabolical tour de force, the wickedness which the canon ascribes to contemporary Gaels is secular in strain, and does not extend to charges of heresy or heathenism. That would seem to be a phenomenon born after 1560, and notably in the reign of James VI and I, which is rich in rhetoric condemning the Highlands as a spiritual void inhabited by Scotland's pagan aboriginals: 'these vnhalloved people with that vnchristiane language'.⁸⁹

The corpus of texts characterising late-medieval Gaelic Scots is also our richest source for another phenomenon, namely shifts in the terms used to identify the two main vernacular languages of late medieval Scotland, Scots and Gaelic, and their associated speech communities. This parallelism is suggestive of a link between them, and the primacy accorded by the literati to language in determining behaviour has already been noted. In asking what deeper explanations, if any, underlay the portrayal of Gaelic Scots in these texts, consideration of the data they furnish on identities is an avenue requiring exploration.

The phenomenon is of course well known and much commented upon, but has perhaps not been discussed before explicitly in relation to the stereotype.⁹⁰ To 'Fordun' Gaelic Scots—*gens insulana sive*

⁸⁸*Letters of James V*, edd. Robert Kerr Hannay and Denys Hay (Edinburgh 1954), 162; Mason, 'Civil society and the Celts', 112–17; Cowan, 'Discovery of the Gàidhealtachd', 278.

⁸⁹*Highland Papers*, ed. J. R. N. MacPhail, 4 vols. (Scottish History Society: Edinburgh 1914–34) iii, 302. See also above, n. 14.

⁹⁰David Murison, 'Linguistic relationships in medieval Scotland', in *The Scottish Tradition*, ed. G. W. S. Barrow (Edinburgh 1974), 71–83, at 81; J. Derrick McClure, *Scots and its Literature* (Amsterdam 1995), 44–7; Charles W. J. Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland 1698–1981: The Geographical History of a Language* (Edinburgh 1984), 22–4; Michael Lynch, 'National identity in Ireland and Scotland, 1500–1640', in *Nations, Nationalism and Patriotism in the European Past*, edd. Bjørn, Grant, and Stringer, 109–36, at 129; Dawson, 'Gaidhealtachd', 283–4; Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism*, 125.

montana—are *Scoti*, and they speak *lingua Scotica*. Translation of *Scoti* and its cognates can of course be problematic. But since this and the preceding chapter's frames of reference are unambiguously Scotland the physical entity, and *nacio Scotorum* of which Gaelic Scots form a constituent *gens*, it must be that 'Scots' and 'the Scottish language' are what 'Fordun' intends.⁹¹ There is no evidence of departure in Wyntoun, or in Bower's verbatim rendition of this chapter. Elsewhere, however, in a passage apparently of his own authorship, Bower refers to Gaelic in Argyll as 'the Scottish and Irish language'.⁹² In entries for 1452 and 1455 respectively, the *Auchinleck Chronicle* applies Irish to the language of Gaelic Scots, and 'ereschery' or Irishry to Gaelic Scots themselves.⁹³

These shifts are confirmed in Dunbar, with Gaelic Scots, and their language, now both referred to as Irish. Beyond Dunbar, the uncomplicated Fordunian model mushrooms into a hydra, virtually all of whose heads are visible in Leslie and his Scots translator Dalrymple come the end of the sixteenth century. The language of Gaelic Scots is nowhere simply Scottish: it is Irish, or the ancient Scottish language, or 'Gaelic'. Their identity as Scots, of the sylvan variety, survives, but has been joined by Irish, ancient Scots, and 'Gael'.⁹⁴ The sixteenth-century corpus hints at a more consistent and

⁹¹Pace David Horsburgh, 'When was Gaelic Scottish? The origins, emergence and development of Scottish Gaelic identity 1400–1750', in *Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig 2000*, edd. Colm Ó Baoill and Nancy R. McGuire (Aberdeen 2002), 231–42, at 232. The approach of 'Fordun' therefore stands in contrast to the excerpt from Solinus which he cites, where the possibility of *Scoti* meaning Gaels, and of *Scotia* as referring to or including Ireland, is of course present. However, note that the passage in Bartholomew which 'Fordun' mistakenly attributes to Isidore treats unambiguously of Scotland, not Ireland, and opens by stating that *Scotica gens* is 'in origin the same people that were formerly in Ireland'.

⁹²*Scotichronicon* iii, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen, and D. E. R. Watt, 388–9: *linguam ... Scoticam scilicet et Hibernicam*.

⁹³Christine McGladdery, *James II* (Edinburgh 1990), 166, 168.

⁹⁴The sixteenth century sees the earliest coinages for Gaels and Gaelic, applied specifically by Scottish literati to Gaelic Scots. Mair, *History*, 361, refers to the territory 'of the Gaels' (*de Galeis*); Boece to *lingua Gathelia* or 'Gatelic' (Boece, *Scotorum Historiae*, fo. iii: cf. Mason 'Civil society and the Celts', 102, and McClure,

concentrated use of 'Irish' with reference to language rather than people. Mair never describes Gaelic Scots as Irish, but always describes their language thus. This could suggest that the shift took place first with language: that Gaelic Scots came to be labelled Irish because they were understood to speak Irish. This would again be consistent with language as the prime determinant of behaviour.

This linguistic shift has naturally been explained in terms of another one, by which the language spoken by non-Gaelic Scots, named *lingua Theutonica* in 'Fordun', and 'Inglis' in vernacular contexts, steadily assumed greater social and political prestige between 1350 and 1500, as the preferred language of aristocracy and government. In 1494 it is apparently referred to for the first time by one of its speakers as 'Scottis', and in 1513 was lauded by Gavin Douglas as 'the language of the Scottis natioun'.⁹⁵ The substitution had taken time, nor was it yet complete. Dunbar, Mair and Leslie all continue to use 'Inglis' of the speech of Lowland Scotland.⁹⁶ Is the timescale indicative, not only of ambivalence concerning Scots' status vis à vis English, but also of a consciousness of Gaelic as the existing *lingua Scotica*, and of this as a reality or obstacle only gradually overcome? Certainly there is a sense of a 'changing of the guard' in the way in which the shifts in the terms applied to each language mesh chronologically, with *ca* 1500 as the point of transition. A passage in Blind Harry's *Wallace*, apparently adopting the perspective of the point of composition *ca* 1476 rather than of the War of Independence, links Gaelic and Scottish, while an Argyll charter of 1497, and a crown charter of 1505, use *Scotice* of Gaelic.⁹⁷ In 1498 Don Pedro de Ayala, Spanish ambassador at the court of

Scots and its Literature, 47) and Buchanan, *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*, fo. 9^r, to their speaking 'the ancient Gaelic language, a little altered' (*vetere Gallorum sermone paulum vtuntur*).

⁹⁵Murison, 'Linguistic relationships in medieval Scotland', 80–1; McClure, *Scots and its Literature*, 44; Jenny Wormald, *Court, Kirk and Community: Scotland 1470–1625* (London 1981), 59–62.

⁹⁶*Dunbar*, ed. Bawcutt i, 204; Mair, *History*, 18, 48; Leslie, *Historie* i, 85.

⁹⁷Murison, 'Linguistic relationships', 78–9; *RMS* ii, nos. 2385, 2873.

James IV, noted that the king's 'Scotch language is as different from English as Aragonese from Castilian. The king speaks, besides, the language of the savages who live in some parts of Scotland and on the islands. It is as different from Scotch as Biscayan is from Castilian'.⁹⁸ Thereafter the evidence suggests the consistent application of Irish to Gaelic in Scotland, both by non-Gaelic and Gaelic speakers. Kennedy, perhaps taking his cue from Dunbar, does so; returning to Argyll in 1547 we find Gaelic as *Hibernice*; a Trossachs deed of 1564 involving Gaelic and non-Gaelic speakers uses Irish of Gaelic and Scots of the Lowland vernacular.⁹⁹ Acknowledgement of Gaelic as the 'national' language of Scotland now emanates from a consciously historicist perspective, in Mair's belief that 'not so long ago it was spoken by the majority of us', and in the assertion of Kennedy:¹⁰⁰

Bot it suld be all trew Scottis mennis lede.
It was the gud langage of this land,
And Scotas it causit to multiply and sprede.

The sixteenth century was not the first to employ 'Irish' as a label for Gaelic Scots and their language. The same was true of Thomas Grey (of language) and John Barbour (of people) in the second half of the fourteenth century. In neither case does the usage seem to bear any connotation other than that of a convenient descriptor.¹⁰¹ What was different come 1500 and after was the universality of the

⁹⁸*Early Travellers in Scotland*, ed. P. Hume Brown (1891: Edinburgh 1978), 39–40.

⁹⁹Dunbar, ed. Bawcutt i, 211; *Argyll Transcripts* made by 10th Duke of Argyll, in Glasgow University Scottish History Department, 10 July; National Register of Archives, *Breadalbane Muniments*, GD112/1/155. McClure, *Scots and its Literature*, 46, is in error in suggesting an instance of Gaelic as 'the Scottish tongue' in the mid-sixteenth century; see John Bannerman, 'Literacy in the Highlands', in *The Renaissance and Reformation in Scotland*, edd. Ian. B. Cowan and Duncan Shaw (Edinburgh 1983), 214–35, at 220.

¹⁰⁰Dunbar, ed. Bawcutt i, 211; Mair, *History*, 50.

¹⁰¹See chapters 2 and 3. The instance in Grey occurs in a context involving Ireland, while those who speak Irish in Scotland 'are called Scots'. For Barbour's use of 'the Irschery ... Off Arghile and the Ilis', and of 'the Irschery off Irland', see *The Bruce*, ed. and trans. A. A. M. Duncan (Edinburgh 1997), 521, 689.

application, especially to language, and the parallel if far less clear-cut process involving the relabelling of 'Inglys' as 'Scots'; suggesting that some kind of watershed in the articulation of Scottish identities had been reached. Otherwise, there seems little to differentiate the approach of John Mair from Thomas Grey. Gaelic is Irish, and its speakers in Scotland are Scots, with Irish denoting strictly and simply the linguistic community with whom the language originated. It was presumably in such a sense that speakers of Gaelic in Scotland referred to their language as Irish, in written Latin or Scots contexts.

Nor is a watershed particularly discernible in terms of representations of Ireland's role in Scottish origins. Down to the War of Independence, the Irish origin of the Scots was a commonplace, and intellectually unquestioned. Although the exigencies of war with England spawned some attempts, notably in the Declaration of Arbroath, 'to promote Scotland rather than Ireland as homeland of *Scoti*', the Irish orthodoxy and the matter of Dalriada remained substantially unchallenged by 'Fordun' or his successors, remaining as the bedrock of Scottish sovereignty and parity with England (the latter especially important after 1603), and of Scottish institutional distinctiveness in church and state, down to Father Thomas Innes's *Critical Essay* of 1729.¹⁰² Mair, followed by Buchanan, may have been highly critical of aspects of the traditional origin legend of the Scots, dismissing the Greek and Egyptian elements represented by Gathelus and Scota as spurious; but he accepted without hesitation, as did Boece, Leslie and Buchanan, that 'we trace our descent from the Irish'.¹⁰³

Unbroken consensus on Ireland's status as the original homeland of the *Scoti* did not debar some of the literati from loaded commentary on the trajectory of more recent Irish history. 'Fordun'

¹⁰²Dauvit Broun, *The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Woodbridge 1999), 198; Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism*, 123–45.

¹⁰³Mair, *History*, 50; Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism*, 125; Mason, 'Civil society and the Celts', 102–3.

associated the onset of contemporary Irish decay and corruption with Ruaidhri Ó Conchobhair, last high-king of Ireland (d. 1198), 'who most improperly for a Christian king wished to have six wives at the same time', and whose lecherous polygamy had alienated both church and people:¹⁰⁴

So he was despised by them all. They refused to obey him in future, and to this day they decline to obey any king at all. Therefore that kingdom for long distinguished in the days of our ancestors is now, as you see, miserably divided into thirty or more kingdoms ... Was not the Irish nation (our neighbours and of the same race as ourselves) formerly wealthy and strong, observing laws and pursuing justice, the mother and foster mother of many saints, to hear whose wisdom, as is related in true histories, many men came from distant lands? After the lapse of a short time when it had spurned virtues of this kind, paralysed with indolence and given over to vices and idleness, not content with one king but through contempt of the laws and their allegiance recognising many kings, it was immediately thrown out of its prosperous cities and towns to the barren and waste regions in the remotest parts of its own kingdom, where it wretchedly lurks to this day in woods, rocks and caves, scarcely possessing food or clothing.

While aspects of the portrait recall what is said in Book II chapter 9, the emphasis there upon the instinctive loyalty of Gaelic Scots to their king creates the clearest of blue water between them and the Irish. Walter Bower, with his far more jaundiced view of Gaelic respect for law and authority, proved more willing to make the link, rewriting a passage in 'Fordun' eulogising the purity of Ireland's soil to comment sourly on the contrast with its people—'hearts full of deceit and wickedness with such a propensity for theft, plundering

¹⁰⁴*Scotichronicon* iii, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen, and D. E. R. Watt, 6–7; *ibid.* ii, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen, 288–93. Cf. Seán Duffy, 'The Anglo Norman era in Scotland: convergence and divergence', in *Celebrating Columba: Irish-Scottish Connections 597–1997*, edd. T. M. Devine and J. F. McMillan (Edinburgh 1999), 15–34, at 15–16.

and murder’—who to him were indistinguishable in their behaviour from Gaelic Scots:¹⁰⁵

poisonous deeds are perpetrated to such an extent among the Irish and among highland and wild Scots (*Scoti transalpini et silvestres*) whom we call *catervani* or *ketherani*, that as it is written, ‘They lie in wait for someone’s blood. They hide their snares against the innocent for no cause; seizing anything of value they fill their caves with spoils and contrive deceit against their own lives’.

Some of Bower’s sixteenth-century successors made explicit the equation of Gaelic Scots and Irish, although they saw less need to retain his rancour. Where Bower may also be anticipatory is in his scepticism about the possibility of achieving a *res publica* grounded in the unanimous adherence of all its subjects to an agreed code of law, if that community diverged ‘in blood’ as sharply as did Scots and English, or, in the Scottish context, Gaels and non-Gaels. Mair, echoed closely by Leslie, asserts that it is ‘with the householding Scots that the government and direction of the kingdom is to be found, inasmuch as they understand better, or at least less ill than the others, the nature of a civil polity’.¹⁰⁶ Mair may have shared with Bower a belief that the only viable Scottish polity was a Lowland polity. Yet he eschewed Bower’s shrill anti-Gaelicism, while neither thought or chose to articulate this state of affairs by employing ‘Irish’ to deny Scottish Gaels status as Scots.

Articulations of Scottish identity exhibited a series of paradigm shifts across the middle and later middle ages, the cumulative effect being to alter the relationship between ‘Scottish’ and ‘Gaelic’; to gnaw away at the capacity of the terms *Scoti* and *lingua Scotica*, and their vernacular equivalents, to be used in the Scottish present to refer in whole, or in part, or at all, to ‘Gaels’ and ‘the Gaelic language’. Whereas for the older authorities drawn upon by ‘Fordun’ the *Scoti* of Scotland were Gaels, speaking Gaelic, to ‘Fordun’ himself—

¹⁰⁵*Scotichronicon* i, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen, 46–9.

¹⁰⁶Mair, *History*, 49; Leslie, *Historie* i, 97.

apparently building upon Bartholomew—*Scoti* equally meant non-Gaels, speaking *lingua Theutonica*. A *Scotus* no longer needed to speak *lingua Scotica*. By the sixteenth century *lingua Scotica* or ‘Scottis’ referred exclusively to something other than Gaelic, the capacity of *Scoti* to refer to Scottish Gaels had been dissipated, and Gaels in Scotland could be described as inhabitants of *hibernica patria*.¹⁰⁷

Presented thus, the shifts in terminology seem to signify the sort of self-conscious determinism present in David Murison’s formulation, coined with reference to the linguistic situation *ca* 1500: ‘by ignoring the Highlands, state and speech after more than four hundred years had found unity, in the King’s Scots’.¹⁰⁸ In fact, the tentative and far from universal adoption of ‘Scottis’ rather than ‘Inglis’ suggests no sudden triumphalist annexation.¹⁰⁹ The matter at hand—the birth and growth of a Lowland Scottish identity, and what to call it—proceeded along lines which were primarily organic rather than manufactured, without the sense of drive and definition which would imply a single governing dynamo. The nearest candidate on view was a Stewart court to which several of the literati—Bower, Dunbar, Montgomerie—had connections, and whose attitudes towards Gaelic Scotland may also find expression in the observations of foreign emissaries such as Froissart and de Ayala, and in ritual enactments such as James IV’s tournament featuring the Black Knight, or, more blatantly, the baptism of James VI.¹¹⁰ Yet the Stewart dynasty’s attitudes and policies towards Gaelic Scotland before the reign of James VI and I sent out signals which were mixed and intermittent rather than constant and expulsive, and hence subversive rather than supportive of the carving out of a high road to Scottish statehood in the later middle ages. Nor did the labour pains

¹⁰⁷*RMS* iv, no. 1669.

¹⁰⁸Murison, ‘Linguistic relationships in medieval Scotland’, 81.

¹⁰⁹McClure, *Scots and its Literature*, 7–8.

¹¹⁰Louise Olga Frandeburg, *City, Marriage, Tournament: Arts of Rule in Late Medieval Scotland* (Madison, Wis. 1991), 237–40; Michael Lynch, ‘Queen Mary’s triumph: the baptismal celebrations at Stirling in December 1566’, *SHR* 69 (1990) 1–21, at 6–7.

find form as an ideological war of words waged across the Highland line over copyright control of 'Scotland the brand', for the only evidence in this vein is that generated by the flyting genre, and in neither register nor weight is it capable of bearing such an interpretation. Rather, struggle was internalised, as 'Fordun' and his successors grappled with the uncompromisingly Gaelic template which was their historiographical inheritance.

When it came to rationalising the transition from a scenario where all *Scoti* were Gaels, to one where it was questionable whether any *Scoti* were Gaels, the inherited orthodoxy of Scottish origins left very little room for manoeuvre, generating pressures and setting limits that endured across the later middle ages and beyond. These non-Gaelic *Scoti* could hardly be a different *gens* of separate origin: they could only be Gaels who had ceased to be Gaels.¹¹¹ How had this happened, and, if superiority came with it, whence did that superiority derive? In Scottish terms the obvious answer—contact with the 'civilised' south—effectively meant the absorption of English language, custom, personnel. While saying this was unproblematic for Bartholomew the Englishman, the nature of the case for Scottish sovereignty, and the climate of Anglo-Scottish antagonism which prevailed down to the Reformation, made it very hard for the native literati to own up to, a point confirmed by the counter-arguments of Kennedy and Boece, for whom the canker spreading from the south had involved the subversion of the original Scottish language. 'Fordun' is at pains to emphasise that his non-Gaelic *Scoti* do not speak 'English' and are not English. Come the sixteenth century John Mair had no qualms in saying that Lowland Scots spoke English—or that until relatively recently most Scots spoke Gaelic. The prophet of Anglo-Scottish Union's own

¹¹¹However, there seems to be some evidence of manipulation of the Scottish origin legend as a response to this very problem. For the suggestion that a passage in 'Fordun' (*Scotichronicon* i, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen, 46–7) draws a distinction between the followers of Gathelus and Scota in order to foreshadow or explain the two *gentes* of late medieval Scotland, see Nicholson, 'Domesticated Scots and Wild Scots', 5–6. Cf. Morét, 'Historians and languages', 60–1.

understanding of the Scottish past precluded the option of dismembering Scotland by positing an ethnic bond between Lowland Scots and English.¹¹² Beyond the Reformation, John Leslie followed Mair in emphasising cultural commonalities with the south based in the first instance on language: 'the Ingles men, evin as the mair politick Scottis, vses that ald Saxone tounge ... quhilke is now called the Ingles tounge'.¹¹³ It was a tendency which made both men naturally sensitive to the need for simultaneous defence of the ancient Scots, a reflex already detectable in 'Fordun'.¹¹⁴ Acceptance of southern superiority in manners still ran the risk of justifying English superiority in terms of political and ecclesiastical sovereignty, and the faint stirrings of Anglo-Scottish rapprochement did not put an end to the dangers inherent in this proposition. More fundamentally, neither ancient Scots nor contemporary Highlanders could be condemned or rejected outright if both were in some sense representative of Lowland Scots, as their primal and present-day ancestors respectively; the progenitor or doppelganger looking out of the mirror which was the Highland line.

Yet within this aspect of the 'Gaelic dilemma'—how to square a rigid template of Scottish origins with the dynamic course of subsequent history—lay a way out of the dilemma as a whole.¹¹⁵ It

¹¹²Pace Mason, 'Civil society and the Celts', 104.

¹¹³Leslie, *Historie* i, 85.

¹¹⁴Mair, *History*, 40–6; Leslie, *Historie* i, 96–7; above, nn. 12, 18.

¹¹⁵Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism*, ch. 6, argues that a diversity of contemporary *gentes* as in Scotland presented no dilemma for early modern constructions of nationhood, since these depended upon institutional continuity rather than ethnocentrism. Hence Lowland Scottish political culture would have been unaware of any contradiction between, on the one hand, its belief that Scottish sovereignty and distinctiveness in church and state derived from a Gaelic past, and, on the other, its espousal of a virulent anti-Gaelicism in the present. The view taken here is that in the Scottish case at least it is difficult to segregate ethnicity and national identity, since the Scottish origin legend dictated that people no less than institutions were Gaelic in origin. This generated a need to explain the subsequent fissuring of the *gens Scotica* in a way that would not jeopardise institutional integrity; a dilemma most neatly resolved by presenting contemporary Gaels as ancient Scots. Walter Bower for one clearly believed that ethnic diversity could fatally compromise legal homogeneity

was Hector Boece who formally opened up the interpretative avenue which gave vital room for manoeuvre to himself and his successors. This is not to agree with Cowan that Boece's elevation of ancient Scots paved the way for the wholesale rehabilitation of contemporary Gaels by the sixteenth-century historians. It is potentially significant that Boece stops short of stating outright that contemporary Gaels are role models incarnate for their effete southern cousins, whose only hope of regaining their original virtue lies in their re-Gaelicisation. It is hugely significant that his rehabilitation takes place within the confines of his introductory material. Once the narrative commences, as Morét has observed, the Gaels are accorded a thoroughly conventional censoriousness, or silence.¹¹⁶ There was a precise limit to the Boecian historiographical revolution: the point where his preface ended and his history proper began.

Cowan notes that 'Leslie's *Historie* contains very few specific references to the Gaels'; that Buchanan's *Historia* 'does not contain a disproportionate amount of information on the Gàidhealtachd, particularly in the more strictly historical period ... overall, to judge from his silence, the affairs of the north and west were largely irrelevant to his major concern with politics and religious reformation'; that Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie 'barely mentions the Gàidhealtachd at all in his *Historie* ... in all of the histories surveyed above surprisingly little attention is paid to the Highlands and Islands'.¹¹⁷ There is no call for surprise, for this was the real legacy Boece bequeathed his successors. Buchanan and Leslie did explicitly identify ancient Scots with contemporary Gaels, as Boece had not, but coupled this to a much more calculated and qualified

to the point of ruling out a unified Scottish polity (*res publica*), unless one could count on the sort of superhuman royal intervention he ascribes to David II.

¹¹⁶Morét, 'Historians and languages', 61–2. See also Boece, *Vitae*, 99, on Elphinstone seeking out 'the antiquities of the Scottish people, especially in the Hebrides, where are preserved the sepulchres of our ancient kings and the ancient monuments of our race'.

¹¹⁷Cowan, 'Discovery of the Gàidhealtachd', 273–4, 276–8.

conceptualisation of the virtues of the former. They followed Boece in treating the Gaels as prefatory matter, not part of the main text. It is difficult to follow Cowan's line that this elision carried the positive implication that the Gaels had ceased to be regarded as inveterate troublemakers.¹¹⁸ Such remained their role on the rare occasions the narrative acknowledged them. The rest was silence, a silence eloquent beyond words. The sixteenth century witnessed the coming to maturity of what had already been hinted at in Bower and Mair. A line was closing around a self-contained Scottish polity which was synonymous with the Lowlands, and looked to the Highlands for legitimisation of origins and validation of progress. Within Scottish historiography an orthodoxy had taken root which has gone largely unquestioned ever since. Gaelic Scots were a *sine qua non* for the Scottish past, an irrelevance to the Scottish present. They could not be party to the course of Scottish history 'in the more strictly historical period' when this was not their natural habitat. They were present in the past, absent in the present.

As Cowan has also noted, all of this has the look and feel of a dress rehearsal for an age yet to come.¹¹⁹ Both the literati and the policy makers of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries share a commonality of approach to the Highlands which seems too compelling to be accidental.¹²⁰ Did the common root lie in the political sphere: the suppression of the MacDonald Lordship of the Isles, and of Jacobitism? The extent to which the Lordship really was a dagger aimed at the heart of Stewart kingship remains debatable, while its final expiration in the person of Dòmhnall Dubh in 1545 makes for perhaps over-seductive symmetry with the beginning of

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 277–8.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 278–9.

¹²⁰ H. M. Hopfl, 'From savage to Scotsman: conjectural history in the Scottish Enlightenment', *Journal of British Studies* 17 (1978) 19–40; *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Alexander Broadie (Cambridge 2003), 263. On parallels between the Scottish historians of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, see Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment: the Historical Age of the Historical Nation* (Edinburgh 2001), 44–5.

the end of Jacobitism exactly two centuries later. Yet the vision of the sixteenth-century literati lends some substance to the symmetry in the waning of the motif of 'Gael as traitor' in the face of paradigms at once more benign, dismissive and exploitative, and based on the strategic and symbolic benefit of Gaels to a polity which they were no longer deemed to threaten. Foreign potentates courted James IV and V with one eye upon the Gaelic military might they seemed to command: at the intersection of English, Irish and Scottish politics around 1600, James VI sought to harness that might in the interests of a greater British imperium. James's reign also anticipated the British Fisheries Society in its prescription of economic rationalism for the west through the commercial exploitation of the fruits of the sea, and the concomitant establishment of burghs. The Statutes of Iona envisioned an enlightened self-sufficiency for the Isles which bears comparison with the coming of the political economy to the north and west in the form of the crofting system. Long before the Hanoverians embraced Highlandism, the sixteenth-century Stewarts, notably James V and Mary, were dabbling in dressing themselves and their courts in aboriginal attire.¹²¹ Two centuries before Ossian and Adam Smith, the contemporary ancestor was already afoot on Scottish soil. But the first sowing of the stadialist seed, and the birth of Lowland—more properly, non-Gaelic—Scottish identity, takes us back beyond Fordun, at least as far as 'Fordun' and Bartholomew the Englishman, three centuries earlier still.

¹²¹Dawson, 'Gaidhealtachd', 288–9; *Collectanea de Rebus Albanicis*, ed. the Iona Club (Edinburgh 1847), 28–9.

2

Attitudes of *Gall* to *Gaedhel* in Scotland before John of Fordun

DAUVIT BROUN

It is generally held that the idea of Scotland's division between Gaelic 'Highlands' and Scots or English 'Lowlands' can be traced no further back than the mid- to late fourteenth century. One example of the association of the Gaelic language with the highlands from this period is found in *Scalacronica* ('Ladder Chronicle'), a chronicle in French by the Northumbrian knight, Sir Thomas Grey. Grey and his father had close associations with Scotland, and so he cannot be treated simply as representing an outsider's point of view.¹ His Scottish material is likely to have been written sometime between October 1355 and October 1359.² He described how the Picts had no wives and so acquired them from Ireland, 'on condition that their offspring would speak Irish, which language remains to this day in the highlands among those who are called Scots'.³ There is also an example from the 'Highlands' themselves. In January 1366 the papacy at Avignon issued a mandate to the bishop of Argyll granting Eoin Caimbeul a dispensation to marry his cousin, Mariota Chaimbeul. It was explained (in words which, it might be expected,

¹See especially Alexander Grant, 'The death of John Comyn: what was going on?', *SHR* 86 (2007) 176–224, at 207–9.

²He began to work sometime in or after 1355 while he was a prisoner in Edinburgh Castle, and finished the text sometime after David II's second marriage in April 1363 (the latest event noted in the work); but he had almost certainly finished this part of the chronicle before departing for France in 1359: see *Sir Thomas Gray, Scalacronica, 1272–1363*, ed. Andy King (Surtees Society: Woodbridge 2005), xix–xxi.

³... *sure condicioun qe lour issu parlascent Irrays, quel patois demurt a iour de huy, hu haute pays entre lez vns, qest dit Escotoys. ibid.*, 22; W. F. Skene, *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots* (Edinburgh 1867), 199. By 'Irish', of course, Grey means Gaelic. The statement appears in a passage which Grey interpolated into a Scottish king-list-plus-origin-legend; see Dauvit Broun, *The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Woodbridge 1999), 91–5.

would have echoed Eoin's supplication) that the pool of eligible partners was restricted due, among other things, to 'the diversity of dialects between the highlands, in which the said Eoin and Mariota dwell, and the lowlands of Scotland'.⁴ For an example directly from the 'Lowlands' we might naturally turn to the oft-repeated passage in Book II of John of Fordun's *Chronicle of the Scottish People* discussed by Martin MacGregor in the previous chapter.⁵ There (it will be recalled) the Gaelic-speaking inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands are described uncharitably as 'a wild and untamed race, primitive and proud, given to plunder and the easy life', in contrast to 'Teutonic' speakers in the Lowlands, who are touchingly portrayed as 'home-loving, civilised, trustworthy, tolerant and polite'.⁶ This account is so vivid and detailed that it is little wonder that so many historians have made it the starting point of their discussion of Scotland's perceived division into 'Highlands' and 'Lowlands'. Unfortunately its date and authorship can no longer be regarded as straightforward issues.

W. F. Skene, whose edition of Fordun's *Chronicle* was published in 1871, maintained that most of the work (including Book II) was completed in the mid-1380s.⁷ Skene's reasoning has, however, been challenged by Donald Watt, editor of the new text and translation of Bower's *Scotichronicon* (a much expanded version of Fordun's

⁴*Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers, Relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters*, vol. iv, *A.D. 1362–1404*, prepared by W. H. Bliss and J. A. Twemlow (London 1902), 56. These individuals are identified and the marriage dispensation discussed in Stephen Boardman, *The Campbells, 1250–1513* (Edinburgh 2006), 73–4.

⁵See 7, above.

⁶*Johannis de Fordun Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. W. F. Skene and trans. Felix J. H. Skene, 2 vols. (Edinburgh 1871–2) [*Chron. Fordun*] i, 42; ii, 38. The best translation is in Alexander Grant, 'Aspects of national consciousness in medieval Scotland', in *Nations, Nationalism and Patriotism in the European Past*, edd. Claus Bjørn, Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer (Copenhagen 1994), 68–95, at 76–7, where he discusses problems posed by the terms *gens*, *nacio* and *populus*.

⁷*Chron. Fordun* i, xxx–xxxiii. He regarded his MS D (Dublin, Trinity College MS 498), which consists only of Book V and *Gesta Annalia* to 1363, as the earliest stage in Fordun's work, with books I to IV not completed until 1385. MS D, however, plainly represents an abbreviated text (see Broun, *The Irish Identity*, 73 n. 55).

Chronicle). Initially Watt pointed to possible indications that Fordun may still have been active as late as 1389 or 1390, but that it might also be suggested that he died as early as 1363.⁸ Elsewhere Watt argued firmly for the earlier date.⁹ Scholars in the interim have opted for either the mid-1360s or the mid-1380s, or various points in-between. This makes it difficult to decide whether the famous passage in Book II of the *Chronicle* should be set alongside the comments of Thomas Grey and the dispensation granted to Eoin Caimbeul and Mariota Chaimbeul as potentially an early statement of the 'Highland/Lowland divide', or whether it should be viewed as belonging to nearly a generation later. Should Fordun be regarded as a self-conscious innovator, or as simply an elaborator of what had become a familiar way of imagining Scotland? The problem of dating the passage is even more pressing if we follow Professor Barrow's remark that 'the reign of Robert II [1371–90] seems extraordinarily early for the emergence of so clear-cut a dichotomy between highland and lowland Scotland'.¹⁰

The dating of Fordun's work is complicated by the fact that the text (or, rather, texts) attributed to him have pointed to different conclusions. The *Chronicle* itself (consisting of five books) goes no further than 1153 and ends with a genealogy of David I obtained (we are told) from Walter Wardlaw, bishop of Glasgow, who is referred to as a cardinal. This would point firmly to a date sometime between

⁸*Scotichronicon by Walter Bower in Latin and English*, gen. ed. D. E. R. Watt, vol. iii, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen, and D. E. R. Watt (Edinburgh 1995), xvi–xvii.

⁹D. E. R. Watt, 'Fordun, John (*d.* in or after 1363)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edd. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford 2004) [*ODNB*] xx, 355–7. Note also the passing reference to the 1360s as the date of Fordun's work, in *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower in Latin and English*, vol. ix, ed. D. E. R. Watt (Edinburgh 1998), xi. This earlier dating was anticipated (but not discussed) in Grant, 'Aspects of national consciousness in medieval Scotland', 76.

¹⁰G. W. S. Barrow, *Scotland and its Neighbours in the Middle Ages* (London 1992), 105 (in a paper originally published as 'The lost Gàidhealtachd of medieval Scotland', in *Gaelic and Scotland: Alba agus a' Ghàidhlig*, ed. William Gillies (Edinburgh 1989), 67–88).

23 December 1383 and 23 August 1387.¹¹ In some of the manuscripts, however, other texts have been appended, including material known to scholarship as *Gesta Annalia*, which runs from St Margaret's English royal ancestors as far as 1363. In some cases this has been continued fairly chaotically to 1385 (probably by a later scribe). Donald Watt regarded *Gesta Annalia* as a separate work by Fordun which originally stopped in the middle of 1363 because he died that year or soon afterwards.¹² This, of course, requires that the reference to Cardinal Wardlaw (and other indications of a date during Robert II's reign, 1371–90¹³) be seen as later additions.¹⁴

All these assumptions about the genesis of Fordun's *Chronicle* and its relationship with *Gesta Annalia* have now been challenged, and the extent of Fordun's own contribution has been called into question. The disposition of *Gesta Annalia* in the manuscripts, and its relationship to other chronicles, has been used to show that it consisted originally of a text ending in 1285.¹⁵ (For convenience this first part of *Gesta Annalia* has been dubbed 'Gesta Annalia I', and the later addition of material covering the years 1285–1363 'Gesta Annalia II'.) *Gesta Annalia* I, in turn, has been shown to be the only surviving part of an earlier version of Fordun's *Chronicle* (dubbed 'Proto-Fordun') which was probably completed in 1285.¹⁶ 'Proto-Fordun' itself appears to have been an expanded version of an even earlier work attributable to Richard Vairement, a Frenchman who

¹¹Dauvit Broun, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain from the Picts to Alexander III* (Edinburgh 2007), 262.

¹²Watt, 'Fordun, John', *ODNB* xx, 355–7.

¹³For example, the Stewart castle of Rothesay is described as 'royal': *Chron. Fordun* i, 43. I am grateful to Steve Boardman for discussing this issue with me.

¹⁴The evidence for a date as late as 1389 or even 1390 is restricted to one branch of the stemma, and should therefore be regarded as additions by a copyist/redactor: see Dauvit Broun, 'A new look at *Gesta Annalia* attributed to John of Fordun', in *Church, Chronicle and Learning in Medieval and Early Renaissance Scotland*, ed. B. E. Crawford (Edinburgh 1999), 9–30, at 10–11.

¹⁵Broun, 'A new look at *Gesta Annalia*' (building on Watt's realisation that the *Chronica* and *Gesta Annalia* were separate works).

¹⁶Broun, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain*, 216–29.

came to Scotland in the service of Marie de Coucy, Alexander II's second queen, in 1239 and who is last heard of in Scotland in 1267.¹⁷ This raises an alarming range of possibilities about the authorship of the passage on the 'Highland/Lowland' divide which could, of course, have important implications for our understanding of when and how such ideas were first formulated. Was it penned by Vairement no later (probably) than the 1260s, or by the author of 'Proto-Fordun' in 1285? Or should it still be ascribed to Fordun himself, whose own contributions can now be securely dated to the mid-1380s?¹⁸ Unfortunately the application of this recent work on Fordun's *Chronicle* specifically to the famous section on 'Highlands' and 'Lowlands' is not sufficiently clear-cut to permit a confident answer. Instead of using the passage as a springboard for a discussion of the origins of the 'Highland/Lowland' dichotomy, therefore, it will be set aside so that the subject of when and how this dichotomy first took root in a Scottish context can be explored afresh. Only after this has been attempted will the question of its authorship be broached again.

It should be said at once that the scope for such a reinvestigation appears at first sight to be very limited. There is nothing in the secondary literature to suggest that, with or without the famous passage attributed to Fordun, there is any reason to suppose that the 'Highland/Lowland' division existed in any meaningful sense much before Fordun's day. The most influential discussion of the earlier absence of this phenomenon is Geoffrey Barrow's article 'The Highlands in the lifetime of Robert the Bruce'.¹⁹ His scene-setting remarks are strikingly clear on the subject:²⁰

¹⁷Vairement's career is discussed in G. W. S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots. Government, Church and Society from the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Century*, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh 2003), 192–3 and D. E. R. Watt, *A Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Graduates to A.D. 1410* (Oxford 1977), 559–60.

¹⁸The formal caveat explained in Broun, 'A new look at *Gesta Annalia*', 27–8 (n. 85a) carries little weight on its own.

¹⁹Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots*, 2nd edn, 332–49, originally published in *The Stewarts* 12 (1963–7), 26–46.

²⁰Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots*, 2nd edn, 332.

Neither in the chronicle nor in the record of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries do we hear of anything equivalent to the 'Highland Line' of later times. Indeed, the very terms 'Highlands' and 'Lowlands' have no place in the considerable body of written evidence surviving from the period before 1300. 'Ye hielands and ye lawlans, oh whaur hae ye been?' The plain answer is that they do not seem to have been anywhere: in those terms, they had simply not entered the minds of men.

He then asked why this should have been so. He observed:²¹

Between mountain and plain there was then no religious barrier, and the Gaelic language must have been perfectly familiar up and down the east coast from the Ord of Caithness to Queensferry. It must, moreover, still have been the ordinary working language of Carrick and the rest of Galloway. The social and agrarian pattern of Scotland may have had regional variations, but there was no significant variation between highlands and lowlands, as there came to be later.

He qualified this, however, by noting 'the poverty of the soil and its unsuitability for settled agriculture' in the highlands, as against the lowlands where, in the thirteenth century, 'agriculture already predominated'.²² In the end he remarked that 'in later times the history of Scotland was to take a course which both engendered and aggravated a schism between highlands and lowlands, but if we search for the beginnings of that schism as early as the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, we search in vain'.²³

The study of this schism before 1300 is nevertheless the principal objective of this paper. It is not, however, based on any straightforward disagreement with specific statements made by Barrow and others about the non-existence of a 'Highland/Lowland' dichotomy. Neither is it to deny that 'Lowland' consciousness of 'Highlands' may have changed in the mid-fourteenth century.²⁴ The

²¹ *Ibid.*, 333.

²² *Ibid.*, 336.

²³ *Ibid.*, 349.

²⁴ I am grateful to Stephen Boardman for clarifying this point for me.

point of departure for this essay is that the way the 'Highland/Lowland divide' has usually been conceived by historians is open to question. It will be argued that, as a result of this reappraisal, the existence in the 'Lowlands' of a polarised view of Gaels and non-Gaels, far from disappearing, actually becomes easier to recognise significantly earlier than 1300.

The consensus that 'Highlands' first appears in the mid- to late fourteenth century is based on more than simply the silence of earlier records. It is supported by discussions of political, social, economic or cultural developments which have offered attractive ways to explain why the 'Highland/Lowland' dichotomy apparently began to manifest itself at that particular time. It has been argued, for example, that this reflected the relatively recent retreat of Gaelic to the Highlands, so that it was possible for the first time to think that mountain-folk and Gaelic went together. A striking visual statement of this is a map published by Ranald Nicholson in which a line representing Scotland's linguistic and cultural division wanders conjecturally across the fringes of higher ground from the Lennox north-east towards the Braes of Angus and Braemar and then back north-west towards Inverness.²⁵ Alexander Grant has added to this considerably by pointing to the destabilisation of Moray as a possible political context for the view of Highlanders as wild and dangerous. Grant has also argued that the distinction between the pastoral Highlands and agricultural Lowlands may have become more pronounced after the plagues of 1349 and 1363.²⁶

How obvious was all this to contemporaries? It would be dangerous to assume that the perception of a 'Highland/Lowland

²⁵Ranald Nicholson, *Scotland: the Later Middle Ages* (Edinburgh 1974). A much more extensive area is assigned to Gaelic *ca* 1400 in *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707*, edd. Peter G. B. McNeill and Hector L. MacQueen (Edinburgh 1996), 427, although this conflicts with the text accompanying the map (420), where Gaelic is said to have been extinct by 1350 in Fife, Kinross and Clackmannan.

²⁶Alexander Grant, *Independence and Nationhood. Scotland 1306–1469* (London 1984), 200–9. For the political situation in Moray, see also Stephen I. Boardman, *The Early Stewart Kings, Robert II and Robert III, 1371–1406* (East Linton 1996), 46–8, 72–9.

divide' (whenever that was, and in whatever form) was necessarily espoused by everyone in the 'Lowlands'. It is not simply that 'Lowlanders' can be identified who deployed the stereotype of 'savage Highlanders' in a positive rather than a negative fashion;²⁷ it must be doubted whether all 'Lowlanders', even those among the ruling elite, would have used the stereotype at all. An important case in point is John Barbour. In 1376 he wrote his massive masterpiece in Scots, *The Bruce*, vividly recounting the exploits of Robert I and Sir James Douglas. Gaels appear frequently in his narrative, and are regularly described as 'Irish' (for instance, the *Irschery ... off Arghile and the Illis*).²⁸ But there is no trace of stereotype or prejudice in his treatment of the Gaels of Scotland or Ireland. He included a full account of Edward Bruce's campaign in Ireland; but even when he described how Edward's Irish allies failed to stand and fight with him in the final fatal battle at Dundalk because pitched battles were not their way of conducting warfare, Barbour did not disparage *Irschery*, or make any adverse comment about cowardice or disloyalty, despite the fact that their departure left Edward hopelessly outnumbered, and that Barbour had just recounted how Edward upbraided his Scottish captains for suggesting a tactical retreat.²⁹

²⁷E. J. Cowan, 'The discovery of the Gàidhealtachd in sixteenth century Scotland', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 60 (1997–8) 259–84. It may be noted that an identification of Scots with desperate plunderers living in the mountains is found in one of the accounts of Scottish origins incorporated into what became Fordun's *Chronicle*. There it is described how the *Scoti*, while they were in Spain, were compelled to live wretchedly in the Pyrenees with barely anything to eat or any decent clothes to wear, and were driven to plundering their neighbours: Brown, *The Irish Identity*, 77, and 48 for text (section XX.2bc). The best translation is *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower in Latin and English*, gen. ed. D. E. R. Watt, vol. i, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen (Edinburgh 1993), 53.

²⁸In the battle at Byland: *Barbour's Bruce*, edd. Matthew P. McDiarmid and James A. C. Stevenson, 3 vols. (Scottish Text Society: Edinburgh, 1980–5) iii, 202 (XVIII, ll. 443–5); John Barbour, *The Bruce*, ed. and trans. A. A. M. Duncan (Edinburgh 1997), 687–8.

²⁹*Barbour's Bruce*, edd. McDiarmid and Stevenson iii, 186–9 (XVIII, ll. 25–89); *The Bruce*, ed. and trans. Duncan, 667–70. Barbour's attitude contrasts sharply with

It is not clear, indeed, that Barbour even regarded 'Gaelic' and 'Highland' as synonymous. It is true that he described Robert I's battalion at Bannockburn as consisting of 'all the men from Carrick, Argyll and Kintyre, and [those men] of the Isles whose lord was Aengus of Islay; and as well as all these, he also had a great host of armed men from the *plane land*'.³⁰ The reference to *plane land* here may simply be topographical, however, contrasting with Carrick, Argyll, Kintyre and the Isles, and need not imply a rough-and-ready distinction between non-Gaels and Gaels. It is striking, moreover, that he does not refer to an amorphous mass of 'highlanders', but lists specific regions and lordships (including Robert I's own home territory of Carrick³¹): it is the 'lowland' contingent which is presented indiscriminately.

The little that is known of Barbour's background and career suggest that his contact with Gaelic culture was probably limited to King Robert II's court, the immediate audience for *The Bruce*.³² Barbour spent most of his adult life as archdeacon of Aberdeen,

Walter Bower (1385–1449), abbot of Inchcolm, who managed to twist Bede's description of Ireland as bereft of snakes and an 'antidote to poison' by stating that St. Patrick, Columba, and Bridget made the land and animals 'cleansed from all harmful infection so that the people might have a polished mirror for the contemplation of their own appearance and the reformation of their uncouth and uncivilised behaviour', which was necessary because they had 'such hearts full of deceit and wickedness and with such a propensity for theft, plundering and murder': *Scotichronicon* i, edd. and trans. MacQueen and MacQueen (Edinburgh 1993), 47.

³⁰*Barbour's Bruce*, edd. McDiarmid and Stevenson iii, 14 (XI, ll. 339–46); *The Bruce*, ed. and trans. Duncan, 420–3.

³¹Robert was born at Turnberry in 1274 and became earl of Carrick in 1292. Robert I's home milieu has been vividly described in G. W. S. Barrow, *Robert the Bruce and the Scottish Identity* (Edinburgh 1984), esp. 16–17: 'As far as we can tell, Annandale and the English Honour of Huntingdon meant very little to him, but the Firth of Clyde, the Scottish islands and Ireland seem always to have counted for much ... In Robert Bruce we do not see the stereotyped image of an Anglo-Norman knight or the flower of chivalry of Barbour's spirited poem, but rather a potentate in the immemorial mould of the western Gaidhealtachd' (although Barrow continues by saying that there was more to Robert Bruce than simply that).

³²For the Gaelic element in Robert II's court, which was frequently located in Gaelic areas, see chapter 3.

where he may have met John of Fordun (if, indeed, Fordun was a chantry priest in Aberdeen cathedral, as was claimed in a text written approximately half a century or more after Fordun's death).³³ Barbour can hardly be dismissed as a maverick voice, therefore. It seems that some other explanation of the vision of a 'Highland/Lowland' dichotomy in Fordun's *Chronicle* is needed than simply that its author (whoever he was) was a 'Lowlander'.

A more specific problem is that some of the emerging differences which have been claimed as dividing 'Highlands' and 'Lowlands' by the mid- to late fourteenth century are more apparent than real. As Geoffrey Barrow has observed, Fordun 'must have been greatly oversimplifying a complex situation'.³⁴ It would be absurd, for example, to take the linguistic division too literally. An historical geographer's map of how two languages meet does not typically have a simple boundary-line between them (unless some profound social division is involved), but deploys a wide vocabulary of shading based on a patchwork of small areas.³⁵ In the absence of a critical mass of data, we should assume that this was also true in medieval Scotland. Indeed, in general terms, both socially as well as culturally, the true situation is likely to have been equally complex. As Kenneth Nicholls has aptly remarked, 'the Highlands also included a vast intermediate

³³In an addition to the prologue of Bower's *Scotichronicon* in a copy of the work (London British Library MS Royal 13 E.X) made for Paisley abbey sometime (probably) after Bower's death on 24 December 1449 and before the death of Pope Nicholas V, 24 March 1455: see *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower in Latin and English*, vol. ix, ed. D. E. R. Watt (Edinburgh 1998), 2–3 (text and translation), 9, and 186. Bower, recounting a discussion of Fordun's work by some men of learning, said that a 'venerable scholar' recalled his acquaintance with Fordun himself (*ibid.*, 2–3). Fordun probably died sometime after December 1383 (Brown, 'A new look at *Gesta Annalia*', 27–8), but if this story is to be believed, he may not have lived for much more than a decade after 1383.

³⁴Barrow, *Scotland and its Neighbours*, 106.

³⁵See, for example, the techniques deployed for mapping Welsh-speakers in Wales in 1991 in John Aitchison and Harold Carter, *A Geography of the Welsh Language 1961–1991* (Cardiff 1994), ch. 6. The standard work for Gaelic is Charles W. J. Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland, 1698–1981: The Geographical History of a Language* (Edinburgh 1984): see esp. the maps in chapter X.

zone, Lennox, Atholl and Breadalbane, Strathspey, the Aird and Sutherland, Bute and Arran ...', so that '... the Highlands do not seem to have a frontier. Instead they had that very different thing, a transitional zone'.³⁶

If this situation could be imagined in greatly oversimplified terms in the mid- to late fourteenth century, then why not earlier? This is not a hypothetical question. In Book XV (*De regionibus*) of the great encyclopaedia, *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, completed ca 1245 by Bartholomew the Englishman, it is observed that most Scots these days had been improved through intermingling with the English, except for 'wild men' (*silvestres*), Scots and Irish, who adhered to the clothing, language, food and other customs of their forefathers.³⁷ When Book XV of Bartholomew's work was translated into French in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, 'wild men' was rendered as 'those of them who live in the wastelands'.³⁸ Clearly the specific association of Gaelic language and culture with uncultivated terrain had entered the mind of at least one foreign scholar as early as 1250×75.

The link between Gaelic and wastelands in this instance need only have been derived from Bartholomew's reference to *silvestres*,

³⁶Kenneth Nicholls, 'Celtic contrasts: Ireland and Scotland', *History Ireland* 7 no. 3 (Autumn 1999) 22–6, at 23–4 (drawing on a paper given to the Colloquium of Scottish Medieval and Renaissance Research at Pitlochry on 7 January 1995).

³⁷For the Latin of this passage (with translation) see 15 and n.19 (above). A new edition of the encyclopaedia is in progress, but Book XV has not yet been published: *Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum*, edd. Christel Meier *et al.*, vols. i and vi (Turnhout 2007). The only complete scholarly version of the text is *On the Properties of Things: John of Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum: a Critical Text*, edd. M. C. Seymour *et al.*, 3 vols. (Oxford 1975–88) (the passage on Scotland is at vol. ii, 812). Bartholomew was an early Franciscan teacher and administrator, who taught in Paris and held high office in Germany and central Europe: see M. C. Seymour *et al.*, *Bartholomaeus Anglicus and his Encyclopedia* (Aldershot 1992), 1–10, and 29–33 for dating the work to ca 1245.

³⁸*les uns de eus ki habitant es guastines. Le Livre des Regions par Barthélemy L'Anglais*, ed. Brent A. Pitts (Anglo-Norman Text Society: London 2006), 43. This Anglo-Norman French translation survives in only one manuscript, so it is unlikely to have been particularly influential. For the manuscript and its dating, see *ibid.*, 2–3.

‘wild men’, rather than from any knowledge of even an approximate coincidence of Gaelic with highlands. In the light of this, can it be assumed that the ‘Highland/Lowland’ dichotomy visible in the later middle ages was necessarily grounded in reality at all? Have historians been too ready to suppose that ‘Highlands’ and ‘Lowlands’ first appeared because of a coincidence of circumstances: political, social, economic, and cultural?

Although the influence of cultural stereotypes has been recognised by some commentators, it has been suggested that these coloured, but did not create, the dichotomy itself.³⁹ The relationship between image and reality is, however, likely to have been more complex. Other explanations of the immediate cause of the ‘Highland/Lowland’ division need to be considered, especially in the light of similar stereotyped oppositions. No-one would deny that the pejorative elements in the depiction of Highlanders in Fordun’s *Chronicle* have a much longer history in European culture.⁴⁰ It is the image of the barbarian, the fierce warrior, lazy and lawless, who lives unkempt in inhospitable territory and threatens the cosy, ordered world of industrious decent people who live in towns and lush countryside. This vision of barbarity versus civilisation can be traced from antiquity to modern times. It has been applied in different contexts—Roman versus non-Roman, Christian versus pagan, ‘reformed’ Latin Christendom versus ‘unreformed’—and adapted accordingly, with some elements emphasised or elaborated and others ignored.⁴¹ It has perceptively been remarked by W. G.

³⁹E.g., Wilson McLeod, *Divided Gaels. Gaelic Cultural Identities in Scotland and Ireland c.1200–c.1650* (Oxford 2004), 18, in which the ideological aspect of the passage in Fordun is noted, but explanations are still sought primarily in the social, political and cultural conditions of the mid- to late fourteenth century.

⁴⁰See also 11, above.

⁴¹For example, in a Scottish context, although reference is made in the passage in Fordun’s *Chronicle* to a propensity to plunder, deceit is not included as a ‘Highland’ trait: indeed, its author goes out of his way, it seems, to emphasise their potential loyalty and obedience to the law (see below, 76). This contrasts with Bower’s dramatic comment that ‘poisonous deeds are perpetrated to such an extent among the Irish and among highland and wild Scots whom we call Catervans or Ketherans, that,

Jones, in the conclusion of his survey of this imagery in Europe from late Antiquity to the Renaissance, that 'the image of the "barbarian", whatever its specific historical context and to whomever applied, was the invention of civilized man who thereby expressed his own strong sense of cultural and moral superiority'.⁴² Now, it might be expected that the authors of the more articulate expressions of this imagery (such as the Byzantine historian Agathias in his *History*, or Gerald of Wales in his accounts of the Irish and Welsh, or to a lesser extent the unknown author of the oft-quoted passage in Fordun's *Chronicle*) included some 'real', if generalised, observations. But a crucial point has been made by Patrick Amory in relation to Agathias which applies equally to the passage in Fordun's *Chronicle*: 'just because details could be correct does not mean that we must accept the whole *framework* ... as a transparent or objective template'.⁴³

The depiction of 'barbarians', it may be suggested, is rooted in the need of some people to promote themselves as 'civilized'. It is the self-consciousness of the 'civilized' which creates 'barbarians'. The question, then, would be not so much whether something like the 'Highland/Lowland' dichotomy arose from a deepening differentiation between two cultures, but whether the political, economic and social conditions of those who saw themselves as civilized might explain their need to espouse this imagery. The most

as it is written, "They lie in wait for someone's blood. They hide their snares against the innocent for no cause; seizing anything that is of value they fill their caves with spoils and contrive deceit against their own lives"': *Scotichronicon* i, edd. and trans. MacQueen and MacQueen, 49.

⁴²W. G. Jones, 'The image of the barbarian in medieval Europe', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13 (1971) 376–407, quotation at 405.

⁴³Patrick Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489–554* (Cambridge 1997), 18 n. 12 (the italics are original). For Agathias on barbarians, see Averil Cameron, *Agathias* (Oxford 1970), 116–17. Cameron observes (at 117) that, 'in line with ancient ethnological tradition and with Procopius, Agathias took it for granted that 'barbarian' equalled 'lawless'; Agathias also assumed that a barbarian would be unable to cope with classical learning. There were social and cultural differences between Byzantines and Persians or Franks, but Agathias's presentation of this was clearly not objective, and depended heavily on established ways of thinking about his own culture and society, and about those outside it'.

direct explanation, indeed, may be ideological. The idea of 'civilization' is never found in a vacuum, but is typically espoused as part of broader framework of social norms and certainties, particularly when these are being actively promoted or vigorously defended.

When considering the origins of the 'Highland/Lowland' divide, moreover, it is far from clear that we should be limited to these terms in particular. Discussion of the existence of a perceived 'Highland/Lowland' dichotomy has to date been determined quite literally by the presence or absence of these topographical labels. This may seem a natural way to focus the discussion when writing in a language, such as English, in which the topographical dimension is given primacy. This would not be true, however, when writing in Gaelic, where the equivalent terms for the 'Highlands' and the 'Lowlands' are *A' Ghàidhealtachd* and *A' Ghalldachd*. In Gaelic it is the cultural, and specifically the linguistic aspect of the dichotomy which is headlined. This alternative terminology would be less significant if it could be assumed that both linguistic and topographical aspects emerged simultaneously. But such an assumption has never been tested. It would be unwise, therefore, to put too much emphasis on the significance of the terms 'Highland' and 'Lowland' without examining the possibility that, by the time these appear to be widely used, a dichotomy perceived in linguistic or other terms may have already been well established. If this is so, the Gaelic terms *Gall* and *Gaedhel* would provide a more helpful frame of reference than the equivalent topographical terms, 'Lowlander' and 'Highlander', in English.

What emerges from the survey of attitudes to Gaels in texts written and/or extracted by monks and clerics in the Scottish kingdom before 1300 is that the association of Gaels with 'Highlands' did not represent the beginning of a perceived 'schism', but signified the development of an existing stereotype of Gaels as barbarians. It is noteworthy that the basis of the dichotomy as far as Fordun's *Chronicle*, Grey, and the papal mandate of 1366 were concerned was not topography but language. 'Diversity of dialects' was the key

factor which was said to have been an obstacle to intermarriage between those in the Highlands and Lowlands; it was language, not residence in the Highlands, which in Grey's eyes marked out the descendants of the Irish wives of the Picts. In Fordun's *Chronicle*, moreover, the celebrated passage begins with the comment that 'the character of the Scots varies according to the difference in language'. In these examples the topographical element could be purely locational: in other words, 'highlands' may have been intended, rather than 'Highlands' replete with the wider cultural and social ramifications of that term in modern English usage. In Fordun's *Chronicle*, the people who spoke *lingua Theutonica* are situated not in general terms in the plains or lowlands, but more precisely 'by the sea coast and the plains', and those who spoke *lingua Scotica* are not simply of the mountains, but are placed with care in 'the mountains and outlying islands'. In each case the perspective of land and sea is more apparent than a crude topographical label.

In looking for evidence for the earlier appearance in Scotland of the image of the barbarian we should seek to be as inclusive as possible, and so avoid the risk of distortion due to concentrating chiefly on only one or two key elements. The bottom line is that the stereotype should have been used by one sector of Scottish society to contrast itself positively with another. The best source, of course, must be material written within the bounds of the Scottish kingdom. Sadly, very little survives. One of the most important extant manuscripts from Scotland in this period is the *Chronicle of Melrose* (London, British Library Cotton Julius B. XIII fos 2–47 + London, British Library Cotton Faustina B. IX fos 2–75). This was continued in fits and starts at Melrose throughout most of the thirteenth century.⁴⁴ Another key source is the material associated with St

⁴⁴Dauvit Broun and Julian Harrison, *The Chronicle of Melrose Abbey: a Stratigraphic Edition*, vol.i, *Introduction and Facsimile Edition* (Woodbridge 2007). The earlier facsimile edition is *The Chronicle of Melrose from the Cottonian Manuscript, Faustina B ix in the British Museum: a complete and full-size facsimile in collotype*, with intro. by Alan Orr Anderson and Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson, and index by William Croft Dickinson (London 1936).

Margaret in Madrid, Royal Palace Library, MS II. 2097, a Dunfermline manuscript produced during the reign of James III (1460–88). All but one of the texts (Turgot's *Life of Margaret*) survive only in this manuscript and evidently originated in Dunfermline in the thirteenth century. The most important is the *Miracles of St Margaret of Scotland*.⁴⁵

A fundamental point is that the chroniclers of Melrose did not regard themselves as *Scoti*. In the account of events in 1258 (written into the chronicle in the following year, or soon thereafter) we are told that 'Scots and Galwegians, who were in the army [which had assembled at Roxburgh], returning home unhappily, pillaged the country in many ways'.⁴⁶ When Alexander III called his army together again in September in Roxburghshire, 'the Scots and Galwegians devastated almost the whole of that country'.⁴⁷ It has also been observed that, in the *Miracles of St Margaret*, there is one occasion where a *Scotus* is contrasted with a 'local girl' (*puella indigena*), so that 'clearly the monks of thirteenth-century Dunfermline did not see themselves unequivocally as 'Scots' '.⁴⁸ A non-identification with *Scoti* may also be detected in the 'Holyrood Chronicle', a much briefer and more jejune text than its counterpart

⁴⁵ *The Miracles of St Æbbe of Coldingham and St Margaret of Scotland*, ed. and trans. Robert Bartlett (Oxford 2003).

⁴⁶ ... *Scoti et Galwithienses qui in exercitu fuerunt ... infelicitate ad propria reuertentes patriam in multis expoliauerunt*. BL Cotton Faustina B. IX fo. 59r (Stratum 25, entered sometime after 2 February 1259 and probably before mid-1264: Broun and Harrison, *Chronicle of Melrose* i, 157–8); *Chronicle of Melrose*, edd. Anderson and Anderson, 115; *Early Sources of Scottish History A.D. 500–1286*, collected and trans. Alan Orr Anderson, 2 vols. (Edinburgh 1922) ii, 591. Perhaps they returned 'unhappily' because hopes of gaining plunder from an invasion across the border were frustrated when the invasion failed to materialise.

⁴⁷ ... *et Scoti et Galwithienses fere totam patriam illam depopulati sunt*. BL Cotton Faustina B. IX fo. 59v (Stratum 25, entered sometime after 2 February 1259 and probably before mid-1264: Broun and Harrison, *Chronicle of Melrose* i, 157–8); *Chronicle of Melrose*, edd. Anderson and Anderson, 116; Anderson, *Early Sources* ii, 593.

⁴⁸ *The Miracles of St Æbbe of Coldingham and St Margaret of Scotland*, ed. and trans. Bartlett, xli; 84–5 (chap. 6).

from Melrose. It is reported there that, on 23 September 1168, three individuals from south of the Forth 'were killed by deceit of the Scots'.⁴⁹ The impression here is that Scots are untrustworthy, which the chroniclers at Holyrood would hardly have allowed if they considered themselves to be numbered among them!

Unfortunately none of these texts, by their nature, lend themselves readily to an extended discourse on how to define a Scot. Exactly what the chroniclers of Melrose meant by 'Scots' has to be inferred from occasional passing references, without any guarantee of consistency across generations of scribes and editors. Clearly 'Scots' in the account of 1258 was not simply a generic term for all Gaelic-speakers; the Galwegians were Gaelic-speakers too. The simplest interpretation of 'Scots' here would be as inhabitants of 'Scotland', which until the early thirteenth century was defined as north of the Forth.⁵⁰ This could, on the face of it, be supported by the chronicle's record of events in 1216, in which we are told that Alexander II exempted *Scoti* from serving in the army which he raised to enter into England. The king took an aid from them instead. It is known that those who contributed to this included men on Arbroath abbey's tofts in royal burghs.⁵¹

It is unlikely, however, that 'Scots' here meant everyone from north of the Forth, lumping the monks of Arbroath and their burgess retainers together with the rest of the predominantly rural, native

⁴⁹*fraude Scottorum interfecti sunt: A Scottish Chronicle known as the Chronicle of Holyrood*, ed. Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson with some additional notes by Alan Orr Anderson (Scottish History Society: Edinburgh 1938), 151 (and see comment at 37). The chronicle becomes a contemporary Scottish source from 1150, kept at Holyrood until sometime between 1171 and 1186 (probably 1186), and subsequently at Coupar Angus until 1189 (see discussion at 35–9).

⁵⁰D. Broun, 'Defining Scotland and the Scots before the wars of independence', in *Image and Identity: The Making and Re-making of Scotland through the Ages*, edd. Dauvit Broun, Richard J. Finlay and Michael Lynch (Edinburgh 1998), 4–17, at 6–7.

⁵¹Alexander II confirmed that this would not create a precedent against the abbey's immunity: *Liber S. Thome de Aberbrothoc Registrum Abacie de Aberbrothoc*, edd. P. Chalmers and C. Innes, 2 vols. (Bannatyne Club: Edinburgh), i (1848), 80 (no. 111); see also 79 (no. 110).

Gaelic-speaking population. For a start, the chroniclers of Melrose by 1258 did not use 'Scots' simply to mean the inhabitants of 'Scotland'. When the events of 1216 were entered into the chronicle in 1218 (or soon thereafter), 'Scotland' was used of the kingdom as a whole.⁵² The monks of Melrose thought of themselves as living in Scotland, but did not regard themselves as Scots. If 'Scots' preserved an earlier sense of people living north of the Forth, then there may have been some factor at work other than geography which allowed this usage of the term to retain its relevance. This is reinforced by the distinction drawn in the minds of Dunfermline monks between a local and a Scot. Clearly for them, too, not all those living north of the Forth were Scots.

In the case of the Melrose Chronicle the enduring distinguishing feature of Scots is not difficult to find. In the eyes of the monks of Melrose, 'Scots' were marked out particularly by their bad behaviour.⁵³ We are told, in the account of the first muster of the army in 1258, that the Scots and Galwegians ate meat even on Good Friday. On the face of it, it is difficult to say whether this really happened, or whether the Melrose chronicler thought it was plausible because he expected Scots and Galwegians to be ungodly. There is, however, a clear-cut example of a negative stereotype creating detail which never occurred in reality. In the annal for 1235 (probably entered into the chronicle in 1240), the killing of the prior and sacrist of the abbey of Tongland by 'Scots' was followed by a particularly callous act. It is likely that these Scots were men of

⁵²BL Cotton Faustina B. IX fo. 32v (Stratum 9, entered probably in 1218 or not long thereafter: Broun and Harrison, *Chronicle of Melrose* i, 134; *Chronicle of Melrose*, edd. Anderson and Anderson, 62, where towns in the Merse are described as 'in the southern part of Scotland' when King John of England wasted them in 1216; at 64, where Galloway is described as 'in the western part of Scotland' in an account of a supernatural event witnessed there in 1216.

⁵³What follows is discussed in more detail in D. Broun, 'Becoming Scottish in the thirteenth century: the evidence of the Chronicle of Melrose', in *West Over Sea. Studies in Scandinavian Sea-Borne Expansion and Settlement before 1300. A Festschrift in Honour of Dr Barbara E. Crawford*, edd. Beverley Ballin Smith, Simon Taylor and Gareth Williams (Leiden 2007), 19–32, at 24–5.

Menteith, whose earl had been left in charge in Galloway following the suppression of a revolt.⁵⁴ There is no reason to doubt that Tongland suffered violence at their hands; the callous act these Scots then went on to perpetrate, however, bears an uncanny resemblance to a report of a Scottish atrocity in the annal for 1216.⁵⁵ The heinous incident described in 1216 has plainly been added to the 1235 account.⁵⁶ Presumably it seemed to monks at Melrose that such sacrilegious savagery was the kind of thing that *Scoti* were liable to perpetrate. There must be a strong suspicion that the same occurred when the devastations by Scots and Galwegians in 1258 were written up, garnishing the account with an allegation of disregard for basic Christian observance.⁵⁷

For the monks of Melrose, therefore, 'Scots' was a term loaded with cultural significance, conjuring up an image of people who lived beyond the realm of common Christian decency. There is at least a hint that, for monks of Dunfermline, 'Scot' may also have had negative connotations. Apart from the Scot mentioned alongside the local girl, only one other person is designated as such in the *Miracles*

⁵⁴BL Cotton Faustina B. IX fo. 43v (Stratum 17, entered probably early 1240: Broun and Harrison, *Chronicle of Melrose* i, 145); *Chronicle of Melrose*, edd. Anderson and Anderson, 84; Anderson, *Early Sources* ii, 497.

⁵⁵Broun, 'Becoming Scottish in the thirteenth century', 24–5. BL Cotton Faustina B. IX fo. 33r (Stratum 9, entered probably in 1218 or not long thereafter: Broun and Harrison, *Chronicle of Melrose* i, 134); *Chronicle of Melrose*, edd. Anderson and Anderson, 63; Anderson, *Early Sources* ii, 407–8.

⁵⁶The similarity of the two passages was pointed out by A. O. Anderson (*Early Sources* ii, 497, nn. 2 & 3), and by W. Croft Dickinson in *Chronicle of Melrose*, edd. Anderson and Anderson, 248 (where it is observed that 'probably all this account [in 1235] is artificial').

⁵⁷The only other occasion in which chroniclers at Melrose referred contemporaneously (or nearly so) to Scots *en masse* is in the account of William I's invasion of Northumbria in 1173, in which 'the Scots cruelly burned with fire a great part of Northumbria, and they savagely pierced with the sword its populace': BL Cotton Faustina B. IX fo. 21v (Stratum 5, entered after 17 March 1199, probably in the first decade of the thirteenth century: Broun and Harrison, *Chronicle of Melrose* i, 129–30); *Chronicle of Melrose*, edd. Anderson and Anderson, 40; Anderson, *Early Sources* ii, 278.

of *St Margaret*: 'a certain Scot by birth and a very impudent man'.⁵⁸ This *could* mean that impudence and being a Scot were thought to go naturally together, in the same way that the reference to the deceit of the Scots in the Holyrood Chronicle could suggest that perfidy was not an unexpected Scottish trait. Also, as far as Gaelic is concerned, although no specific reference to language is made in the Chronicle of Melrose, it is surely not too fanciful to infer that the Melrose (and perhaps Dunfermline and Holyrood) identikit-picture of a typical Scot would also have included Gaelic as a distinguishing feature. This would have been one of the most obvious differences between the majority of people north of the Forth and the monks of Arbroath or their burgh-living men, or the monks of Dunfermline and those living next to them in Dunfermline. Those dwelling in Arbroath or Dunfermline would hardly have been regarded by a Melrose chronicler as having much in common with those who went on the rampage in 1216. Gaelic would also have been an instantly recognised characteristic shared with the Galwegians who were paired with the Scots in their sacrilege of 1258.

But does this mean that *all* Gaelic speakers would automatically have been regarded as barbarians by cloistered communities in the south and east? So far the discussion has of necessity focused on a few snippets of text. One way of supplementing this meagre diet is by considering writings by authors who could not in any normal way be regarded as Scottish, but whose work would have been regarded as authoritative (by monks and clerics, at least), and can be shown to have been read and repeated approvingly in texts of Scottish origin.⁵⁹

⁵⁸*Scotico quidem genere et nimis proteruo. The Miracles of St Æbbe of Coldingham and St Margaret of Scotland*, ed. and trans. Bartlett, 74–5. *Proteruus* could also mean 'violent' or 'wanton'.

⁵⁹This is not to deny, of course, that many other important texts would have been potentially opinion-forming (such as Bartholomew the Englishman's popular encyclopaedia), but there is no evidence for how Scots may have reacted to material relating to Scotland in these works. For an example of a Scottish student in Oxford's disapproval of material in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, see G. W. S. Barrow, *The Anglo-Norman Era in Scottish History* (Oxford 1980), 2.

An important example is the lamentation on the death of David I written by Aelred of Rievaulx.⁶⁰ The praise of a famous king of Scots by a leading monastic writer is likely to have been well known and cherished in Scotland (and especially so in Melrose, a daughter house of Rievaulx founded by David I). It was an important source for the history of St Margaret's ancestors and descendants that lies behind *Gesta Annalia* I.⁶¹ As for Aelred himself, he was during his lifetime a close friend of David I and his son Earl Henry. At an early stage in his career he had been an official in David I's household. When he

⁶⁰For Aelred's text (under the title *Genealogia Regum Anglorum*), see *Patrologiae Cursus Completus ... Series Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, vol. cxcv (Paris 1855), cols. 711–38. There is a need for a modern edition of this text, not least due to complications unforeseen in Anselm Hoste, *Bibliotheca Aelrediana: a survey of the manuscripts, old catalogues, editions and studies concerning St Aelred of Rievaulx*, *Instrumenta Patristica* ii (The Hague 1962), 111–14. The chief problem is that the text published by J.-P. Migne (a reprint of Twysden's edition) is an abbreviated version of Aelred's work. Because much of the version actually written by Aelred was copied into book V of Fordun's *Chronicle* (and thus appears in Bower's *Scotichronicon*), the new edition of *Scotichronicon* is the only place where Aelred's 'original' text may be consulted—albeit only a section of it, and in a late copy (but with the added benefit of a translation): *Scotichronicon* iii, edd. and trans. MacQueen, MacQueen and Watt, 138–69. The status of this in relation to the lost archetype has yet to be determined, of course. The section of Aelred's *Genealogia* quoted in Fordun's *Chronicle* and Bower's *Scotichronicon* has hitherto been regarded mistakenly as a separate work entitled *Eulogium Davidis Regis Scotorum* (see, e.g., the comment on *Scotichronicon* book V chapter 45 in *ibid.* iii, 261). The seed of this error was sown by John Pinkerton's decision to publish this section of the *Genealogia* on its own, taking it from London, British Library MS Cotton Vitellius B xi (as Pinkerton himself noted: John Pinkerton, *Vitae Antiquae Sanctorum qui habitaverunt in ea Parte Britanniae qui nunc vocatur Scotia* (London 1789), viii). On inspection, this turns out to be a copy of the full version of Aelred's *Genealogia* (fos. 109ra–125ra). The *Eulogium* is therefore simply a section of the *Genealogia* which had no independent existence until it was printed by Pinkerton (who gave it the title *Eulogium Davidis Regis Scotorum*). These problems are briefly outlined by Marsha Dutton in *Aelred of Rievaulx: The Historical Works*, trans. Jane Patricia Freeland and ed. Marsha L. Dutton, Cistercian Fathers Series no. 56 (Kalamazoo 2005), 35–6; a new translation of the *Genealogia* is at 41–122.

⁶¹I am very grateful to Alice Taylor for giving me access to her unpublished analysis of the earliest stages of the text that survives today as *Gesta Annalia* I.

later joined the Cistercian house at Rievaulx and went on to become its abbot, he would have maintained his ties with Scotland through Rievaulx's daughter houses.⁶² Aelred's views may therefore be taken as representing a significant current of opinion in the kingdom itself, at least in the mid-twelfth century.

There are a number of instances in the lamentation on David I's death in which Aelred made plain his view of Scots. In one place he praised David for taming the 'total barbarity of that people' so that, 'forgetting its natural fierceness, it submitted its neck to the laws which the king's meekness dictated, and gratefully accepted peace, of which it knew nothing up to that point'.⁶³ In another extended passage (quoted in *Gesta Annalia*)⁶⁴ he described how David had transformed Scotland from a harsh land of famine to a fertile country with trading ports, castles and cities. The people, he said, were no longer naked or clothed with rough cloaks, but wore fine linen and purple cloth. Their savage behaviour had been calmed by the Christian religion. Chastity in marriage and clerical celibacy, which (it is stated) were largely unknown beforehand, had been imposed by King David, and church-attendance and payment of offerings and tithes to the Church had been made regular.

Aelred's portrayal is obviously dramatic and overdrawn. It was intended as a vivid example of how Aelred's idea of good kingship would lead inevitably to peace and prosperity. The vision of Scottish barbarity which he articulated was not entirely of his own making, however. John Gillingham in particular has argued that, during the second quarter of the twelfth century, English writers began to regard their Celtic neighbours as barbarians—not just in a general

⁶²Melrose and Newbattle were daughter-houses founded by David I before Aelred became abbot; during his abbacy David founded a daughter house of Melrose at Kinloss and Malcolm IV established another daughter house at Coupar Angus.

⁶³*Unde tota illa gentis illius barbaries manseuifecta ... ut naturalis sevicie, legibus, quas regia mansuetudo dictabat, colla submitteret, et pacem, quam eatenus nesciebat, gratanter acciperet. Scotichronicon* iii, edd. MacQueen, MacQueen and Watt, 144–5 (for text and trans.)

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 158–9; *Chron. Fordun* i, 436–7.

sense of being outlandish, but specifically due to what was regarded as their savage conduct of war, economic underdevelopment, and primitive social *mores*.⁶⁵ These depictions of 'Celtic backwardness' include all the elements (and more) noted by Aelred. There is little direct evidence, however, for how this theme may have been treated by men of letters in Scotland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, although most of these texts must have been known to them.

Another example of a text by a non-Scottish author which was evidently read attentively and used by some Scottish churchmen is the letter of Nicholas of Evesham to Eadmer, bishop-elect of St Andrews, in 1120, in which an argument was assembled for St Andrews' claim to be an archbishopric. Most of Nicholas's text was retained by Scottish churchmen (in the form of a tract) and deployed by them in the 1160s (if not before) in their struggle to resist attempts by the archbishop of York to enforce the obedience of Scottish bishops.⁶⁶ It can be suggested, therefore, that the tract as it

⁶⁵John Gillingham, 'The beginnings of English imperialism', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 5 (1992) 392–409; *idem*, 'The English invasion of Ireland', in *Representing Ireland: Literature and the origins of conflict, 1534–1660*, edd. Brendan Bradshaw *et al.* (Cambridge 1993), 24–42, republished in John Gillingham, *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity, and Political Values* (Woodbridge 2000), 3–18, 145–60.

⁶⁶Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 139, 167r/v (in foliation of M. R. James), or 165r/v (P. Hunter Blair's reckoning based on the actual run of folios: see his 'Some observations on the *Historia Regum*', cited below, at 64 n. 2). It was added to the manuscript along with a poetic vision of Mael Coluim IV written shortly after his death (9 December 1165): see P. Hunter Blair, 'Some observations on the *Historia Regum* attributed to Symeon of Durham', in *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border*, ed. N. K. Chadwick (Cambridge 1963), 63–118, at 69. For September 1164 as the date of this manuscript, see *ibid.*, 77–8, and D. N. Dumville, 'The Corpus Christi "Nennius"', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 25 (1972–4) 369–80, at 371, where it is also observed that the quire which contains this Scottish material (quire XX) 'may be a somewhat later addition to the volume'. The only other item in quire XX is a fragment of a saga with strong York associations (Hunter Blair, 'Some observations on the *Historia Regum*', 69), although seven folios may now be lost (*ibid.*, 63). Perhaps the tract based on Nicholas of Evesham's letter was produced by Scottish churchmen in their confrontation with Archbishop Roger of Bishopsbridge at Norham in 1164 (Dumville, 'The Corpus Christi "Nennius"', 371; on this encounter,

stands was regarded as acceptable, at least to the clerical elite in St Andrews.⁶⁷ One part of Nicholas of Evesham's prose which was retained unaltered was where Nicholas argued that the bishop of St Andrews was in practice an archbishop, 'although the barbarism of the people is unaware of the honour of the pallium'⁶⁸ (the symbol of office granted by popes to archbishops). As far as Nicholas was concerned, it seems, the Scots were remote from what he regarded as the civilized world. By the 1160s this would not have been regarded by leading churchmen in St Andrews as applying to them. But they could have been prepared to accept the 'barbarity' of their Gaelic predecessors as one way of helping to explain their predicament in seeking recognition of archiepiscopal status without being able to point to the precedent of a pope granting the pallium.

The most prominent element in the image of Scottish barbarism which these texts and the Chronicle of Melrose share is that of ungodliness, ranging from ignorance of the norms of Christendom to acts of savagery and sacrilege. Something similar is suggested by the reference to deceitful Scots in the Holyrood Chronicle. And the same idea is found in an account of St Margaret's English ancestors and Scottish royal descendants written at Dunfermline *ca* 1250 or soon thereafter.⁶⁹ There we are told that 'the Scots were ignorant before the coming of the blessed Margaret, and were not entirely familiar

see most recently D. E. R. Watt, *Medieval Church Councils in Scotland* (Edinburgh 2000), 21).

⁶⁷By the 1160s Glasgow may have been wary of St Andrews' claim to be an archbishopric (see Broun, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain*, 144–6). If there is a connection between the text and the confrontation at Norham in 1164 (see previous note), however, then it may be noteworthy that the Scottish delegation was led by Ingram, archdeacon of Glasgow (and soon afterwards bishop-elect of Glasgow); but Ingram was also the king's chancellor, which could explain why he took so prominent a role. (At this point the bishop of St Andrews had yet to be consecrated, and there may have been a vacancy in the bishopric of Glasgow.)

⁶⁸*licet barbaries gentis pallii honorem ignoret.*

⁶⁹Broun, *Irish Identity*, 196. The text is unpublished. It survives uniquely in Madrid, Royal Palace Library, MS II. 2097, fos. 21v–25v, a Dunfermline manuscript produced during the reign of James III (1460–88). See comments in *Scotichronicon* iii, edd. MacQueen, MacQueen and Watt, xvii–xviii.

with God's law'.⁷⁰ Here, as in Aelred, there is a clear sense that there were Scots in the present who, through the agency of St Margaret or David, were no longer ignorant barbarians. The possibility of improvement could also be read into the snippet from Nicholas of Evesham. Only in the Chronicle of Melrose is this absent. Perhaps the Melrose chroniclers shared Aelred's view that the Scots were naturally fierce and unruly.⁷¹ The idea that 'Scots' were sacrilegious savages cannot have been too deeply ingrained, however, because in due course the monks of Melrose identified themselves as 'Scots'. This was obviously not the case when the events of 1258 were written up, but this change had occurred a generation later, when events in the mid-1260s were belatedly added to the chronicle sometime between 14 April 1286 and (probably) May 1291.⁷² By then, for example, it was said of one of their number, Reginald of Roxburgh, with regard to his successful diplomatic efforts to win the Hebrides for Alexander III in 1266, that 'none out of the sons of the Scots has ever been able to accomplish this mission except for the aforesaid monk'.⁷³ Also, the same editor of the chronicle, in a tract on Simon de Montfort's rising which is highly favourable to de Montfort, described Guy de Balliol, Simon de Montfort's standard-bearer at the fateful battle of Evesham, as 'by nation a Scot'.⁷⁴

Finally let us return to Fordun's *Chronicle*. It will be recalled that the texts hitherto ascribed to John of Fordun can now be recognised as originating at least a century earlier. It has been proposed that the core narrative beginning with Scottish origins was originally conceived by Richard Vairement, writing possibly in the 1260s.⁷⁵ This was then significantly enlarged to something akin to what

⁷⁰*rudes enim erant Scoti ante adventum beate Margarite, et legem Dei perfecte non noverunt*. fo. 23r.

⁷¹See 70, above.

⁷²Stratum 38: Broun and Harrison, *Chronicle of Melrose* i, 168–9.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 129: *quidem nuncium nullus unquam ex filiis Scottorum potuit procurare preter monachum predictum*. Such flowery language is fairly typical of this section.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 131: *nacione Scotus*. On this tract (*Opusculum de Simone*) and its authorship, see *ibid.*, xix–xx.

⁷⁵Broun, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain*, 252–60.

survives as Fordun's *Chronicle* (hence its designation as 'proto-Fordun') and continued (in what survives today as *Gesta Annalia* I) to 1285, which was probably when this work was completed.⁷⁶ It may not be possible to determine once-and-for-all whether the famous passage on the 'Highland/Lowland divide' in Fordun's *Chronicle* was penned by Fordun himself, by the author of 'proto-Fordun', or by Richard Vairement. It is significant, however, that *Gesta Annalia* I (i.e., the surviving part of 'proto-Fordun', completed in 1285) includes some references to 'highland Scots' which have not hitherto received much discussion because the text was mistakenly assumed to be by Fordun himself.⁷⁷

There is a particularly striking passage in *Gesta Annalia* I's account of William I's invasion of England in 1173. He went, we are told, 'with the highland Scots, whom they call brutes, and the Galwegians, who knew not how to spare either place or person, but raged after the manner of beasts', devastating Northumberland.⁷⁸ The following year, after William's capture at Alnwick and imprisonment at Falaise in Normandy, 'the Scots and Galwegians ... wickedly and ruthlessly slew their French and English neighbours'.⁷⁹ The rampaging Scots of 1174 were presumably understood to be the same sort who devastated Northumberland the previous year. The next specific mention of a 'highland Scot' is in a very different setting. At

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 216–29.

⁷⁷For reasons why Fordun cannot be the author, see *ibid.*, 223–30.

⁷⁸... *per montanos Scotos, quos brutos uocant, et Galwalenses, qui nec locis nec personis parcere norunt, sed bestiali more seuendo ...*: *Chron. Fordun* i, 262; ii, 257–8. The equivalent passage in *Scotichronicon* has been added to and rewritten significantly: *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower in *Latin and English*, gen. ed. D. E. R. Watt, vol. iv, edd. and trans. David J. Corner, A. B. Scott, William W. Scott and D. E. R. Watt (Edinburgh 1994), 310–11 (where *brutos* is treated without any obvious justification as a proper noun and translated 'Britons' on the grounds that Fordun was punning here on *Britones*—bearing in mind that it had become an historiographical commonplace to identify Brutus as the Britons' eponymous ancestor: see comment at *ibid.* iv, 514).

⁷⁹... *Scoti cum Galwalensibus ... Francos affines et Anglos impie et immisericorditer*: *Chron. Fordun* i, 264; ii, 259.

the inauguration of Alexander III we are told that 'a certain highland Scot, kneeling suddenly before the throne, bowing his head, greeted the king in the mother tongue with these Scottish [i.e., Gaelic] words, saying: *Beannachd Dhé, rí Albanach, Alexanndar mac Alexanndair meic Uilleim meic Énri meic Daibhidh*, and by proclaiming in this way read the genealogy of the kings of Scots to the end'.⁸⁰ In both these instances it is likely that the term 'highland Scot' was chosen by the author of 'proto-Fordun'. The first passage is related to the account of the invasion of 1173 in the Chronicle of Melrose. If the Chronicle of Melrose here repeats the draft which Professor Duncan has argued lies behind *Gesta Annalia*, then 'highland' would be a later addition by the author of 'proto-Fordun'.⁸¹ It has also been shown that the description of Alexander III's inauguration represents a brief contemporary account that has been significantly enlarged in 'proto-Fordun'.⁸² Again, the author of 'proto-Fordun' is likely to be responsible for the use of 'highland' here. This suggests that he considered 'highland Scots' to be distinguished in one instance by their savagery and in the other case by the use of Gaelic.⁸³ Here, then, we may have a writer who used the term 'highland' as a way of distinguishing Scots who were Gaelic-speaking barbarians from other Scots.

This is not the only similarity with the oft-quoted passage in Fordun's *Chronicle*. There 'highland' is not only associated with

⁸⁰... *quidam Scotus montanus ante thronum subito genuflectens materna lingua regem inclinato capite salutavit hiis Scoticis uerbis, dicens: 'Benach de Re Albanne Alexander mac Alexander mac Uleyham mac Henri mac Daid, et sic pronunciando regum Scottorum genealogiam usque in finem legebat. Chron. Fordun i, 294; ii, 290.*

⁸¹A. A. M. Duncan, 'Sources and uses of the Chronicle of Melrose, 1165–1297', in *Kings, Clerics and Chronicles in Scotland, 500–1297*, ed. Simon Taylor (Dublin 2000), 146–85, at 147–50, 163–74: see also 176 (item 10) for collation of this passage in *Gesta Annalia* with the Chronicle of Melrose.

⁸²Broun, *Scottish Independence*, 174–9.

⁸³There are other occasions in the text where 'Scots' is used as a term for the kingdom's inhabitants in general; e.g., in 1165 we are told that Henry II sent his Wardens of the Marches 'prudently to draw from the Scots peace rather than war' (*pacem potius a Scotis quam bellum prudenter allicere*): *Chron. Fordun i, 260; ii, 255.*

fierce Gaelic-speakers, but it is also stated that they are particularly savage against the English, and against Scots who do not speak Gaelic. This may be matched in 'proto-Fordun' with the heightened account of attacks against English and French neighbours in 1174 following King William's capture at Alnwick:⁸⁴

At that time also there took place a most wretched and widespread persecution of the English both in Scotland and Galloway. So intense was it that no consideration was shown to the sex of any [of the victims], but in most places all were cruelly killed without thought of ransom, wherever they could be found.

The most distinctive feature of the famous passage in Fordun's *Chronicle*, however, is the insistence that 'Highlanders' are 'loyal and obedient to their king and country', and, if governed properly, 'are obedient and ready enough to respect the law'. There is a suggestion of this positive element in the account in 'proto-Fordun' of the killing of Uhtred son of Fergus of Galloway by his brother Giolla Brigde in 1174. We are told that the Galwegians, led by Giolla Brigde, 'treacherously hatched a conspiracy ... and separating themselves off from the kingdom of Scotland ...', captured Uhtred; but 'because he had shown himself a true Scot and could not be deflected from this stance', they mutilated Uhtred, and killed him.⁸⁵ Uhtred, as a native Galwegian, would presumably have been regarded by the author as capable of the same savagery as the Galwegians and 'highland Scots' had together been described

⁸⁴*Persecutio quoque tunc Anglorum miserima maximeque tam in Scotia quam Galwallia facta est ita quod nullius generis parceretur sexui quin pleris in locis ac ubicumque percipi poterant omni sprete redemptione crudeliter interirent. Chron. Fordun i, 264* (but note that up to *facta est* is not in the recension represented by **D** and **I**, for which see Brown, 'A new look at *Gesta Annalia*', 10–11; ii, 259. The same is found (with minor variations) in *Scotichronicon* iv, edd. Corner *et al.*, 314–15: my translation is based on this.

⁸⁵*... proditiore ... coniuratione facta se a regno Scocie ... diuidente ... Ochtredus itaque filius Fergusii quia uerus extiterat Scotu, nec flecti potuit ... captus est ... crudeliter interemptus est. Chron. Fordun i, 266; ii, 261; also Scotichronicon iv, edd. Corner *et al.*, 322–3, from where the translation has been taken.*

committing the previous year. But Uhtred is here a 'true Scot' because of his loyalty to the king and kingdom of Scotland.

All in all, it appears that the author of 'proto-Fordun' shared sentiments about the 'Highlands' that were strikingly in tune with those expressed in the famous passage in Fordun's *Chronicle*—so much so that a close connection between the passage and his work seems probable. The simplest scenario, of course, would be that the famous passage was penned by the author of 'proto-Fordun' himself. The alternative is that the passage already existed in Vairement's work, and influenced the thinking of the author of 'proto-Fordun'. An important consideration here is Martin MacGregor's discussion of the encyclopaedia of Bartholomew the Englishman as a source for the passage.⁸⁶ The encyclopaedia was a popular work, so it is possible that Vairement, if he was writing in the 1260s, could have had access to it within a couple of decades of its completion.⁸⁷ It is obviously easier, however, to envisage the author of 'proto-Fordun' using it a generation later. As far as Fordun himself is concerned, it is hard to see how he could be influenced by the scraps in *Gesta Annalia* I noted above; if he was the author of the passage, it would have to be supposed that he arrived independently at the same ideas. The fact that his *Chronicle* is based so profoundly on 'proto-Fordun' makes it easy to envisage him as simply a copyist in this instance. The most likely author of the oft-quoted passage, therefore, is the same scholar who created 'proto-Fordun'. There is reason to suspect that he may himself have been a Gaelic speaker.⁸⁸

I would like to draw this discussion to a close by suggesting a new context for the beginnings of the perception of a 'Highland/Lowland' dichotomy. Elements of this are necessarily speculative, given the quality and quantity of some of the evidence. At the very least, however, this may open doors for further discussion, and take us

⁸⁶See 14–15, above.

⁸⁷The earliest authors to use it were in Germany, where Bartholomew wrote the work: see Seymour *et al.*, *Bartholomaeus Anglicus*, 33–4, where it is also noted that the earliest dated reference is in 1284 (in Paris).

⁸⁸Broun, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain*, 260.

away from too rigid an approach to the issue fixed on the mid- to late fourteenth century. There are two strands to what I wish to propose. The first is to look for a path of development leading up to the first deployment of topographical terminology in a Scottish text. The second is to look for a context in terms of ideology rather than cultural, economic, or other 'real' circumstances.

Most of the material which has been discussed was written by monks and clerics who, although writing from within the kingdom's bounds, did not regard themselves as Scots. In their view Scots, the predominant Gaelic-speakers north of the Forth, were essentially barbarians. But, in the eyes of some (at least), there were Scots who were 'civilized' by accepting 'godly' ways. It may be inferred from this that there was an assumption that Gaelic-speakers were barbarians, but that they could become part of 'civilized' French-speaking society, without necessarily forsaking their Gaelic milieu. It is notable, for example, that in Jordan Fantosme's vivid account of King William's invasions of northern England in 1173, Scots and Galwegians are portrayed in terms remarkably similar to what can be inferred from the Chronicle of Melrose;⁸⁹ nonetheless, there is no suggestion that Donnchadh earl of Fife is a barbarian when he spoke 'like a baron', 'very wisely', offering advice to his king.⁹⁰ An example of such a person at home in both Anglo-French and Gaelic aristocratic worlds would be Giolla Brigde, earl of Strathearn (1171–1223), who took an Anglo-French bride, christened his eldest son Giolla Criosd, included in his court both Anglo-French knights and Gaelic officials, and founded an Augustinian priory which included in its ranks someone who was able and willing to use Gaelic orthography in Latin charters.⁹¹ By the late thirteenth century a

⁸⁹*Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle*, ed. and trans. R. C. Johnston (Oxford 1981), 52 (trans. 53): 'That miserable race (*gent*), on whom God's curse, the Gallovidians, who covet wealth, and the Scots who dwell north of the Forth (*li Escot qui sunt en Albanie*) have no faith in God, the son of Mary: they destroy churches and indulge in wholesale robbery'. *Albanie* (rather than *Escoce*) is also found in ll. 6, 356, 408, 523.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 22 (*cume barun*) and 24.

⁹¹See Cynthia J. Neville, 'A Celtic enclave in Norman Scotland: Earl Gilbert and the

major change in Scottish identity had occurred which would have had an impact on how any vision of Gaelic barbarity may have been expressed within the kingdom's bounds. The monks at Melrose, and doubtless others in Scotland who had previously regarded the 'Scots' as 'others', now identified themselves as Scots. It would no longer have made sense for these 'new' Scots, as it were, to regard Scots in general as naturally barbaric, or as necessarily Gaelic-speaking, with some managing to surmount this by acquiring 'civilized' ways. It must now have been envisaged that there were Scots, like them, who were essentially 'civilized', and had never been native Gaelic speakers. In these circumstances a particular label, such as 'highland Scot', would have been needed for 'uncivilized' Scots, or for those particularly associated with Gaelic culture. According to this line of argument, then, the terms 'Highland' (and implicitly 'Lowland') may have grown out of an earlier perceived cultural differentiation. The association of the 'uncivilized' with mountains would not of itself have been a particularly original idea, of course.⁹² It may have begun to crystallize in a Scottish context, however, because of the fundamental change in what being a Scot signified which occurred (in the case of Melrose, at least) sometime in the 1270s and/or 1280s.

The second strand I wish to propose arises from the obvious fact that everything I have discussed relates specifically to monks and clerics who belonged to institutions founded (or recreated) as part of a European-wide movement of religious and social renewal espoused by kings of Scots in the twelfth century. As far as Aelred is

earldom of Strathearn, 1171–1223', in *Freedom and Authority: Scotland c. 1050–c. 1650. Historical and Historiographical Essays presented to Grant G. Simpson*, edd. Terry Brotherstone and David Ditchburn (East Linton 2000), 75–92; but for the suggestion that he had limited enthusiasm for cultivating links with Anglo-Norman circles and preferred to 'withdraw' to Strathearn, see *eadem*, *Native Lordship in Medieval Scotland: The Earldoms of Strathearn and Lennox, c.1140–1365* (Dublin 2005), 19–23, although I am not convinced by the premises on which this judgement is based. On Gaelic orthography in Inchaffray charters, see Dauvit Broun, 'Gaelic literacy in eastern Scotland between 1124 and 1249', in *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies*, ed. Huw Pryce (Cambridge 1998), 183–201, at 194–6.

⁹²See chapter 1, and 59, above.

concerned, civilisation was a powerful metaphor for his radical vision of a godly society. This required an equally powerful image of the barbarian as a contrast. But would the torch of reform have shone so brightly in the thirteenth century?

In one sense it might have. It is clear that the monks of Dunfermline gained an enduring sense of their significance by presenting their saintly founder (whose relics they venerated) as the agent of Scotland's supposed emergence out of the darkness of ignorance. Presumably the monks of Melrose would have sought similar reassurance of their importance from Aelred's account of how their founder, David I, brought civilization, godliness and prosperity to Scotland. What may, however, have been particularly in their minds by this period was civilization as a metaphor for peace and order under the firm rule of the king. Certainly, the suppression of resistance to royal authority was vigorously celebrated by 'Lowland' writers, and, typically, such resistance was led by those whom they would have regarded as 'unimproved' Gaels.⁹³ On this question, however, we seem to be on surer ground particularly in the surviving part of 'proto-Fordun' (*Gesta Annalia* I), where a much more pronounced concern for law and order can be detected. Its account of the political disturbances of the 1250s can be contrasted with that in the Chronicle of Melrose. Melrose gives a highly partisan account in which Durward and his followers are excoriated

⁹³See, for example, the treatment of Somhairle (Somerled) in 1164 (*Chronicle of Melrose*, edd. Anderson and Anderson, 36–7), Dòmhnall mac Uilleim in 1187 (*ibid.*, 46; *A Scottish Chronicle known as the Chronicle of Holyrood*, ed. Anderson, 171, 193); and also the Mac Uilleim rising of 1230, Galloway rising of 1235, and less dramatically, the Manx rising of 1275, in *Chronicon de Lanercost, M.CC.I. – M.CCC.XLVI*, ed. Joseph Stevenson (Bannatyne Club: Edinburgh 1839): 40–2, 98. For translations, see Anderson, *Early Sources* ii, 254–5, 312–13, 471, 498 n. 1, 672–3. The Chronicle of Lanercost up to 1297 is the work of Richard of Durham, a Franciscan friar based at Haddington in 1270 and then (by 1294) at Berwick: see A. G. Little, *Franciscan Papers, Lists and Documents* (Manchester 1943), 42–54, at 46–8 (reprinted from *English Historical Review* 31 (1916) 269–79 and 32 (1917) 28–9), and Duncan, 'Sources and uses', 175 and n. 107.

as traitors.⁹⁴ *Gesta Annalia* is also somewhat biased, in its case in favour of Durward. Instead of talking of treason, however, the commentary against Durward's opponents is focussed on the deleterious effect of their rule on the country as a whole. At one point the situation is vividly described:⁹⁵

but there were as many kings as there were counsellors; for in those days he who saw the oppression of the poor, the disinheriting of nobles, the burden laid upon the inhabitants, the violations of churches, might with good reason say: woe unto the kingdom where the king is a boy.

Later, when Durward had been ousted for a second time by these counsellors, this provokes another lament for the lack of good government:⁹⁶

As a result this latest deviation was worse than the first. From that time on there arose many acts of persecution and many tribulations among the magnates of Scotland. For these more recent counsellors of

⁹⁴BL Cotton Faustina B. IX fos. 56r–58v (Stratum 25, entered after 2 February 1259 and probably before mid-1264: Broun and Harrison, *Chronicle of Melrose* i, 157–8); *Chronicle of Melrose*, edd. Anderson and Anderson, 109–14; Anderson, *Early Sources* ii, 571, 580–3, 588–90.

⁹⁵*sed quot fuerunt consules, tot fuerunt reges. Quia si quis uiderat hiis diebus oppressiones pauperum, exherediciones nobilium, angariam ciuium, uiolentias ecclesiarum, merito diceret: ue, regno, ubi rex est puer. Chron. Fordun* i, 297; ii, 292. The passage is repeated, with some additions and minor amendments, in *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower in *Latin and English*, gen. ed. D. E. R. Watt, vol. v, edd. and trans. Simon Taylor and D. E. R. Watt, with Brian Scott (Aberdeen 1990), 302–3: my translation is partly based on the translation there.

⁹⁶*Et sic fuit error nouissimus peior priore. Multe persecuciones ex tunc et tribulaciones inter Scotorum procures suborte sunt, quia posteriores regis consules damna et mala antierius perpessa in priores refundere nitebantur. Unde tales pauperum contriciones et ecclesiarum spoliaciones sequebantur quales uise non sunt in Scocia nostris temporibus. Chron. Fordun* i, 298; ii, 293. The passage is repeated word-for-word except for *nostris temporibus* (which is changed to *temporibus priscis*) in *Scotichronicon* v, edd. and trans. Taylor and others, 320–1, from where the translation has been taken. Bower evidently altered *nostris temporibus* because he did not think it appropriate: 'in our times' presumably refers to 1285, when this part of *Gesta Annalia* was written (see 52, 74, above).

the king now tried to retaliate against the former counsellors for the losses and injuries they had suffered previously. So there ensued such a grinding down of the poor and spoliation of churches that have not been seen in Scotland in our times.

Little is claimed for Durward's party: they are merely less bad than the others. What is eagerly sought is the peace and stability of firm government by an adult king. In this context the image of 'highland Scots' may have operated as one kind of extreme contrast to a vision of the peaceful enjoyment of property guaranteed by the strong government of a king. 'True Scots' were those, like Uhtred, who remained loyal to the kingdom. The polar opposite was Uhtred's brother and killer, whose death, we are told⁹⁷

occurred by the will of God, who mercifully heard the constant cries of the poor and needy, and gladly snatched them from the power of stronger men.

The suggestion, then, is that the attitude of *Gall* to *Gaedhel* (of 'Lowlander' to 'Highlander') visible in these texts was determined chiefly by a pattern of thinking about Scottish society which had its origins in the twelfth century. It was then that an image of Gaelic barbarity was adopted by those promoting a new social order, particularly cloistered communities staffed largely by English monks and nuns. This image was then available to be picked up and redefined as part of other self-conscious projections of a 'civilized' ideal, such as the vision of peace and stability under a strong king. But it should not be inferred that this imagery was necessarily endemic or inevitable. In a later era it would be espoused enthusiastically by a writer such as Bower, and ignored by another such as Barbour.⁹⁸ There is no reason to doubt that this was also true in the thirteenth century.

⁹⁷*quod nutu diuino constat fore factum, qui pauperum clamores et egenorum continuos clementer exaudit, et eos de manibus libenter eripit fortiorum. Chron. Fordun* i, 269; ii, 264; also *Scotichronicon* iv, edd. Corner and others, 364–5, from where the translation has been taken (with slight modification).

⁹⁸See 56–7 and n. 29, above.

3

The Gaelic World and the Early Stewart Court

STEPHEN BOARDMAN

It has become something of a commonplace to assert that the mid- to late fourteenth century saw the 'emergence of the Highlands' in the sense of an increased awareness within Scotland of the division of the kingdom into distinct Highland and Lowland zones which were differentiated from each other in terms of geography, social structure, lifestyle and, above all, language. One of the most important (and certainly the most-quoted) pieces of evidence for this development is the description of Scotland provided by the historian John of Fordun, whose *Chronicle* can be dated to the mid-1380s.¹ Fordun's comments have been taken as one of the earliest indications of an increasingly hostile attitude on the part of the Lowland Scot toward the Gael; one of the significant milestones on a path leading toward entrenched cultural antagonism and, eventually, attempts at the systematic persecution of Gaelic society and language.

An important assumption in attempts to outline the development of the 'great ill-will of the lowlander' is that, from the early twelfth century onward, Scottish monarchs identified themselves and their economic, social and political interests with the English-speaking Lowlands and therefore shared, or latterly even shaped, hostile attitudes toward Gaelic Scotland. This historical model of the Gaels and their language as the victims of deliberate and sustained establishment repression was developed in response to conditions in later periods, when an ambitious, wealthy and aggressive government could and did embark on programmes which were consciously designed to marginalise or extirpate the Gaelic language as a contributory factor to the supposed 'barbarity' and lawlessness of the Highlands. This model is less appropriate as a way of explaining

¹The dating of Fordun's work, and the increasingly vexed question of the authorship of the oft-quoted passage, are discussed in chapter 2.

the attitude of the Scottish crown toward Gaelic Scotland for much of the later Middle Ages; for the most part, late medieval kings had neither the ability nor the will to impose governmental and legal, let alone cultural or linguistic, norms on all regions of the kingdom.

The first half-century of Stewart rule after 1371 is one period in which the view of the crown as intrinsically hostile to Highland Scotland seems particularly inappropriate. When the first Stewart king, Robert II, came to the throne in 1371 he was already an influential figure in Gaelic Scotland with extensive personal connections to the aristocracy of the Hebrides, Argyll and Highland Perthshire. Most notably, Robert was regarded as the natural leader of the large Gaelic-speaking population incorporated in the Stewart family's long-established regional lordship in the Firth of Clyde. The first Stewart king enjoyed an easy familiarity and sympathy with Gaelic language and culture that clearly affected many aspects of his reign. For the half-century after 1371 the new 'royal' family gave little indication that it thought in terms of a kingdom divided along the lines suggested by John of Fordun. Literary works encouraged by the Stewart kings, such as John Barbour's *Bruce*, had a rather different vision of the place of Gaelic Scots in the kingdom. It is important to stress that Barbour, rather than Fordun, was the 'man of letters' who most closely represented and reflected the views and attitudes of the Stewart royal court after 1371. Contemporary criticisms of Robert II's rule in Lowland sources meanwhile seem, in part, to have been inspired by the perception that the king was far too closely involved with the affairs of Gaelic Scotland.

At the core of Robert II's relationship with Gaelic Scotland was the great regional lordship his ancestors had built up in and around the Firth of Clyde since the twelfth century. At the simplest level the need to exploit the landed resources of the Stewartry ensured that, even after he became king, Robert spent a great deal of his time in areas dominated by Gaelic language and culture. When the chronicler Jean Froissart reported disparagingly how Robert II resided in 'la sauvage Escose' instead of leading his magnates in

Anglo-Scottish warfare, he was no doubt reflecting the judgement and prejudices of his Lowland Scottish informants.² The Stewart lordship in the west, however, was much more than just a collection of estates; the Steward was also a leader of men who needed to cultivate the loyalty and affection of his adherents. In areas such as Cowal and Bute this process inevitably involved the development of a Gaelic 'persona' and a set of historical myths and symbols that made the Steward a natural focus for the devotion of his Gaelic supporters.

The Stewart advance in the Firth of Clyde was part of a story of restless aristocratic expansion which began with the arrival of the progenitor of the family, Walter fitz Alan, in Scotland during the reign of David I (1124–53).³ Walter became steward of King David's household and received from his royal patron extensive lands to the south of the Clyde: the lordships of Renfrew, Mearns, Strathgryfe and North Kyle as well as other estates scattered through the southern shires.⁴ Like many of the men in David's entourage, Walter was the representative of a family that had only recently established itself in Britain. Walter's father was a Breton knight, Alan fitz Flael, who had been granted lands in the honour of Warin in Shropshire by the English king, Henry I. Sir Alan's grandfather, also Alan, had acted as hereditary steward for the bishops of Dol in Brittany.⁵ From their political and territorial base in and around Renfrew Walter's descendants, eventually known as Stewarts after the royal office they came to dominate, extended their lordship into the Firth of Clyde. Late in the twelfth century the family acquired rights of lordship over Bute; certainly Alan son of Walter the Steward felt able, around 1200, to grant the kirk of Kingarth and the lands associated with it in

²Baron H. Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Oeuvres de Froissart publiées avec les variants des divers manuscrits*, 25 vols. (Brussels 1867–77) [Froissart, *Oeuvres*] xi, 213.

³G. W. S. Barrow, *The Anglo-Norman Era in Scottish History* (Oxford 1980), 13–15, 64–70.

⁴*Regesta Regum Scottorum*, vol. i, *The Acts of Malcolm IV, King of Scots 1153–1165*, ed. G. W. S. Barrow (Edinburgh 1960), no. 184.

⁵J. Horace Round, *Studies in Peerage and Family History* (London 1901), 122.

the south of Bute to Paisley abbey, the Cluniac house which had been founded by the Stewarts earlier in the twelfth century.⁶ By the middle of the thirteenth century the Stewarts' territorial empire had also embraced Cowal, the rocky and stern peninsula which lay to the north of Bute.⁷

Stewart influence in the Firth of Clyde was consolidated and underpinned by the family's possession of a formidable chain of fortresses scattered across Bute and Cowal. The network included the strategically vital castle at Dunoon and the strongholds at Carrick and Glendaruel, which collectively dominated the sea lanes round, and the land routes through, Cowal. The key centre for Stewart lordship in the region, however, was the great castle of Rothesay on Bute. The Stewarts' authority in their newly acquired Firth of Clyde lordships may have rested on their intimidating military capacity and economic and political power, but as the thirteenth century progressed the family clearly cultivated a large and loyal following in the Gaelic-speaking population subject to their lordship. The cohesion and constancy of these adherents was encouraged by the development of views of the past that suggested that the territories under Stewart control possessed an ancient unity, in both worship and political allegiance, which marked them off from surrounding lordships. The fact that Bute and the castle at Rothesay were the focal points of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Stewart lordship was projected backwards to suggest that the island had lain at the heart of the religious and political history of the Gael for centuries. A major part of this process was the emergence of St Brendan as the principal focus for the devotion of the inhabitants of Bute.

⁶Barrow, *Anglo-Norman Era*, 67–8; *Registrum Monasterii de Passelet*, ed. Cosmo Innes (Maitland Club: Edinburgh 1832) [*Paisley Reg.*], 15. The steady advance of Stewart secular power was marked by a series of grants made by the family and its retainers, or by those newly absorbed into the Stewart sphere of influence, in favour of Paisley abbey.

⁷Barrow, *Anglo-Norman Era*, 68; G. W. S. Barrow and A. Royan, 'James Fifth Stewart of Scotland, 1260(?)–1309', in *Essays on the Nobility of Medieval Scotland*, ed. Keith J. Stringer (Edinburgh 1985), 166–94, at 167.

The extent to which Brendan of Clonfert (d. 576) was a figure of general veneration in the islands of the west before the advent of Stewart lordship is difficult to gauge. In Adomnán's *Life of Columba*, (produced *ca* 700) Brendan enjoyed a brief cameo as one of a party of four Irish Holy men, 'founders of monasteries', which visited Columba on Iona. In this episode St Brendan was accorded a vision of a 'column of light' emanating from the head of St Columba as the latter celebrated mass.⁸ While the *Life* presents Brendan as a contemporary and associate of the pre-eminent Hebridean saint, Columba, it does not suggest that the abbot of Clonfert had his own mission to, or following in, the Hebrides and Scottish west coast in the early medieval period. The proposition that Brendan led a mission to the area, and that his posthumous cult had a significant early following in the region, rests largely on the evidence of kirk dedications, place-names and toponyms, all with relatively late dates of first attestation.⁹ This is certainly the case for the Firth of Clyde, where the undoubted popularity of Brendan's cult in the late medieval period does not seem to have grown from early medieval roots. There is, for example, no evidence that Brendan was particularly revered on Bute alongside saints with a more obvious connection to the island such as Bláán and Rónán. In the early medieval period there was no explicit connection made between Brendan's mission and Bute; the most important local saint was Bláán, a native of Bute, whose kirk at Kingarth in the south of the island was an active religious centre in the seventh and eighth centuries.¹⁰ There are, moreover, no Brendan kirk dedications or topographical features bearing his name in the region that can

⁸ *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, edd. and trans. A. O. Anderson and M. O. Anderson, rev. edn. (Oxford 1991), 206–7 (Book III, chapter 17).

⁹ W. J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh 1926) [Watson, *The History of Celtic Place-Names*], 81, 82, 189, 274; *Early Sources of Scottish History A.D. 500–1286*, collected and trans. Alan Orr Anderson, 2 vols. [Anderson, *Early Sources*] (Edinburgh 1922) i, 17–19.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* i, 176–7, 198, 228, 236, 248, 254.

confidently be ascribed to the period before *ca* 1200.¹¹ From around 1200, however, a number of references point towards a growing interest in St Brendan's life and his associations, real or invented, with Scotland in general and the Firth of Clyde in particular. In the late twelfth or early thirteenth century a now lost Latin Life of St Brendan was produced.¹² The provenance and purpose of this hagiography and its linked origin-legend material remain uncertain. Recent work by D. Broun suggests that the saint's life may have been produced in an area of Gaelic Scotland where interaction with Anglo-French culture had been commonplace during the twelfth century; a situation that stimulated the production of hagiographies intended to introduce and explain indigenous saints' cults to the new clerical and aristocratic elites.¹³ Certainly, the appearance of a Latin version of the Life of St Brendan in Scotland roughly coincided with

¹¹St Brendan had no identifiable early medieval 'paruchia' in Scotland and his 'life' was not taken up by any major ecclesiastical institution as an explanation and justification for the lands and churches claimed to be subject to its jurisdiction. The known dedications of churches on Bute did not include Brendan. Kingarth parish had sites associated with St Catán and St Bláán. Rothesay parish church was, by 1323, dedicated to the Virgin Mary (with the suggestion that the original dedication was to St Broc). The chapel in Rothesay castle commemorated St Michael, while another chapel in the burgh was dedicated to St Bridget. *Origines Parochiales Scotiae*, edd. Cosmo Innes *et al.*, 2 vols. in 3 (Bannatyne Club: Edinburgh 1851–5) ii (part 1), 211–12, 221–4. In 1474, the Campbell burgh of barony at Inveraray on Loch Fyne was allowed two fairs, one of which was to be held on St Brendan's day (16 May). The Brendan fair at Inveraray may have been established well before 1474, but he was not the saint first venerated at the site, for the dedication of the kirk at Inveraray, the parish kirk of Kilmaliu, was to a St Liubha or Liba. Watson, *The History of Celtic Place-Names*, 304–5.

¹²Dauvit Broun, *The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Woodbridge 1999), 88. A number of later Scottish chroniclers make reference to this work, largely because it 'included an account of the origins of the *Scoti*, probably as a preliminary to its treatment of the saint's life'.

¹³*Ibid.*, 114. An alternative view is that the Brendan text emerged from a continental hagiographic tradition that linked the story of individual Irish saints with explanatory material outlining the origins of the Irish people for an audience that was otherwise unfamiliar with this history: *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower in Latin and English*, gen. ed. D. E. R. Watt, 9 vols. (Aberdeen/Edinburgh 1987–98), vol. i, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen (Aberdeen 1993), xx.

the imposition of Stewart lordship on Bute and Cowal, and may have been inspired by it. It is impossible to know whether the Latin Life attempted to localise any aspect of the saint's story in the territory of the thirteenth-century Scottish kingdom.¹⁴ *Bliocadran*, a French tale written as a prologue to the Perceval story, gives a fleeting hint that a description of Brendan's mission which centred on Scotland rather than Ireland may have reached the continent by the early thirteenth century.¹⁵ More tellingly, a psalter produced in Paris in the first half of the thirteenth century, apparently for a patron with a particular interest in the saints of the Firth of Clyde and Argyll, gave special prominence to the commemoration of St Brendan.¹⁶ Virginia Glenn

¹⁴The origin myths associated with the hagiography give no indication of a peculiarly 'Scottish' outlook, since they were drawn from the standard pseudo-histories which explained the origin of the Gaelic people and could thus have been attached to the life of any early medieval Gaelic saint.

¹⁵Leonora D. Wolfgang, *Bliocadran: A Prologue to the Perceval of Chrétien de Troyes* (Tübingen 1976), 46–52. In this romance Perceval's mother resolves to remove her son from the martial, chivalric milieu that contributed to the death of her husband. She leaves her home pretending to take the child on pilgrimage to 'Saint Brandain d'Escoce' (l. 554) or 'A Saint Brandain qui est d'Escoce' (l. 587). The description might have arisen from a misreading of an earlier Latin source that identified Brendan as *Scotus* (i.e., an Irishman), although Wolfgang argues (not too convincingly) against this possibility. Even if St Brendan was known as 'of Scotland' this need not have indicated a specific connection to the Firth of Clyde.

¹⁶Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 50, fo. xi; Virginia Glenn, 'Court patronage in Scotland 1240–1340', in *Medieval Art and Architecture in the Diocese of Glasgow*, ed. Richard Fawcett, *British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions* 23 (1998) 111–21, at 112–14. In the calendar attached to the psalter Brendan is joined by other saints associated with Bute and Cowal, such as Bláán, Rónán (an abbot of Kingarth, d. 737) and Fintán (of Kilmun), as well as Maelruba of Applecross ('Melrune'). Fintán and Brendan are two of the three Gaelic saints to be picked out in red ink in the calendar (the name of the third, Columba, has subsequently been erased). The litany has amongst the confessors 'munde' (Fintán), Patrick, Malachy, Bláán, Bean, Berchan, Columba, and a 'frchane' (MS Douce 50, fo. 523r). Devotion to Patrick was so widespread as to defy easy localisation. Nevertheless, it may be significant that Patrick's supposed birthplace at Kilpatrick on the north shore of the Clyde was an active pilgrimage centre in the late twelfth century: *Paisley Reg.*, 166–8; Kenneth Veitch, 'A Study of the Extent to which Existing Native Religious Society

argues that the commemoration of St Fintán (calendar) and the appearance of St Fearchar (litany) might indicate that the Lamonts of Cowal commissioned the psalter. This would have occurred at around the same time as the Lamont-controlled areas of southern Cowal were in the process of being absorbed into the Stewart lordship.¹⁷ There are other possibilities. One feature of the calendar is the commemoration, in red ink, of the feasts of the apostles and of four dates associated with St John the Baptist, i.e. Nativity (24 June), Octave (1 July), Beheading (29 August) and Conception (24 September). This might suggest a connection to the Valliscaulian house at Ardchattan, founded *ca* 1230 by Donnchadh mac Dubhghaill, lord of Argyll.¹⁸ The Valliscaulian order was noted for its devotion to St John.¹⁹ Moreover, Brendan, Fintán, Columba, Rónán and Bláán had churches dedicated to them inside the MacDubhghaill lordship as well as in the Firth of Clyde; indeed, Brendan dedications were most numerous on the islands and coastline of the MacDubhghaill heartland of Lorn. Glenn suggests that an Ardchattan/MacDubhghaill association for the psalter is unlikely because of the non-appearance in the calendar or litany of Catán, apparently the saint commemorated in the place-name Ardchattan. However, the calendar as it now stands is incomplete, with the anniversaries for November, December, January and February

helped to shape Scotland's Reformed Monastic Community, 1070–1286', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Edinburgh 1999), 128–36, 251–2.

¹⁷At the time of the psalter's production the Lamonts were in effective control of St Fintán's pilgrimage centre at Kilmun in Cowal. The name Fearchar had been borne by the chief of the family in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, although the name was not used thereafter. Moreover, the validity of the 'Fearchar' connection depends on reading the St 'frchane' who appears in the litany as a mistake for St Fearchar: Glenn, 'Court patronage', 112–14; MS Douce 50, fo. 523; W. D. H. Sellar, 'Family origins in Cowal and Knapdale', *Scottish Studies* 15 (1971) 21–37, at 23, 26–8.

¹⁸I. B. Cowan and D. E. Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses, Scotland*, 2nd edn. (London 1976), 83–4.

¹⁹In a papal supplication of 27 August 1425 the priory was described as the 'monastery of St Mary and St John the Baptist in Beanedardaloch [Benderloch] ... commonly called Ardkatan': *Calendar of Scottish Supplications to Rome 1423–28*, ed. A. I. Dunlop (Scottish History Society: Edinburgh 1956), 112.

missing. This is significant, because the exact date of St Catán's feast day is rather uncertain. In some (relatively late) Scottish sources the anniversary of St Catán is given as 17 May.²⁰ However, in earlier Irish calendars Catán's anniversary is recorded under the date 1 February.²¹ If the psalter had followed this dating, then any commemoration of Catán would have fallen in the lost section of the calendar.²² Whatever its exact provenance, the psalter reveals that Brendan was an important part of the devotional culture of the inhabitants of the Firth of Clyde and Argyll early in the thirteenth century as Stewart power advanced into the region. It is a reasonable hypothesis that the process of Stewart expansion entailed the family's absorption into the Gaelic world, and the adoption of established symbols of sacred and secular power, as much as it opened up Cowal and Bute to influences from the Stewart lordships to the east of the

²⁰A. P. Forbes, *Kalendars of Scottish Saints* (Edinburgh 1872), 237, 298–9. It seems rather suspicious that this commemoration of 'sanctus Cathanus, Episcopus in Buta Scotiae Insula' should fall on the day following the feast of St Brendan.

²¹*Féilire hÚi Gormáin, The Martyrology of Gorman*, ed. Whitley Stokes (Henry Bradshaw Society: London 1895), 28–9. Whether this Catán was one and the same as the saint apparently commemorated at Ardchattan is another matter. I thank Rachel Butter for the interesting observation that the place-name Ardchattan need not, in any case, have originally been derived from the personal name Catán. The association of the priory with a saint of that name had evidently been made by October 1371, when Prior Martin was described as the 'Prior of Saint 'Kattanus'; *Highland Papers*, ed. J. R. N. MacPhail, 4 vols. (Scottish History Society: Edinburgh 1914–34) ii, 147. However, the papal supplication of 1425 outlined above (n. 19) made no mention of Catán as one of the principal dedicatees of the priory.

²²Watson, *The History of Celtic Place-Names*, 277. In another case of divergence between the general run of Scottish calendars and the Irish martyrologies, the MS Douce 50 Calendar follows the Irish dating. In the martyrologies, St Maelruba of Applecross is commemorated on 21 April. However, Scottish calendars confused Maelruba with St Rufus of Capua and therefore commemorated him on 27 August. MS Douce 50 has St 'Melrune' on 21 April. Forbes, *Kalendars of Scottish Saints*, 11, 120, 133, 160, 209, 240; William Reeves, 'St Maelrubha: his history and churches', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 3 (1857) 258–96. A more important absentee from the calendar in terms of Glenn's objections to an Ardchattan/MacDubhghaill connection may be St Moluag of Lismore (25 June), the chief church of the diocese of Argyll.

Firth of Clyde. Some members of the Stewart kin were certainly familiar with the Gaelic language (and by implication its secular and sacred literature) by the opening decades of the thirteenth century. One indication of this familiarity was the adoption of Gaelic epithets by Stewart lords. In the 1340s a series of documents dealing with the kirk of Tarbolton described Kyle Stewart as 'Walterochiskile', which seems to stand for 'Walter Óg's Kyle'. The Walter Óg commemorated in the place-name may well have been Walter the Steward (d. 1241).²³ Certainly, this Walter's younger son, also Walter, was habitually known by a Gaelic byname, *Ballach* 'spotted', to the extent that when he supplicated the pope to allow his marriage to the heiress of the earldom of Menteith he styled himself Walter *Ballach*.²⁴ The Stewart/Menteith family descended from Walter *Ballach* adopted other practices associated with the aristocracy of parts of Gaelic Scotland, most notably the commissioning of grave-slabs decorated in the distinctive West Highland style.²⁵

²³*Liber Sancte Marie de Melros*, ed. Cosmo Innes, 2 vols. (Bannatyne Club: Edinburgh 1837) ii, nos. 452 (Walterochiskile/Walterhociskile), 453 (Walterochyskyle), 454 (Walterhochiskile), and 455 (Walterohcciskyle). I am very grateful to Professor G. W. S. Barrow for these references and for the suggestion that they relate to Walter II Stewart (1204–41).

²⁴*Johannis de Fordun Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. W. F. Skene and trans. Felix J. H. Skene, 2 vols. (Edinburgh 1871–2) [*Chron. Fordun*] i, 298; *Vetera Monumenta Hibernorum et Scotorum Historiam Illustrantia*, ed. A. Theiner (Rome 1964), no. 237. Walter's apparent familiarity with Gaelic raises questions as to his childhood education and (by extension) that of his elder brother, Alexander the Steward. It is unfortunate that so little is known of the marriages of the Stewart family in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

²⁵K. A. Steer and J. W. M. Bannerman, *Late Medieval Monumental Sculpture in the West Highlands* (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland [RCAHMS]: Edinburgh 1977), 42, 161–2 (no. 107). In October 1357 John Menteith, Lord of Arran and Knapdale, the last of the Menteith-Stewart line, issued a charter at the monastery of Kilwinning which was witnessed by, amongst others, one 'Comedinus medicus'. The Latin name would seem to represent Gaelic *Gille-coimded* (Steer and Bannerman, *Monumental Sculpture*, 158). Most of the witnesses seem to have been drawn from Menteith's lordship of Arran and it may be that *Gille-coimded* was a member of an hereditary Gaelic medical family based on the island and in

The Paris Psalter and the Latin Life of St Brendan indicate a quickening interest in St Brendan around the turn of the thirteenth century, perhaps associated with the advance of the Stewarts in the Firth of Clyde. However, the earliest incontestable indication of a belief that Brendan had a historical connection to Bute occurs in a late-thirteenth-century chronicle preserved in John of Fordun's *Chronica Gentis Scottorum*.²⁶ The chronicle narrative explains that Bute was originally known as Rothesay, but that Brendan had 'built a booth (in our language bothy) that is a monastic cell on the island'.²⁷ Thereafter, we are told, the island was known by two names, Rothesay and Bute, the latter arising from the presence of Brendan's monastic cell or *both*.²⁸

Why did Brendan emerge in the thirteenth century as an attractive and compelling figure for veneration in Bute ahead of saints with a more obvious connection to the island? One factor may have been the huge popularity and wide dissemination of the story of St Brendan's seven-year voyage in search of the Promised Land of the saints, a well-known tale that had spread far beyond the Gaelic-speaking world if, in fact, it originated there. By 1200 the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* had become a standard work across Western Europe, with numerous prose and verse versions in Latin, French and other languages.²⁹ Moreover, the depiction of Brendan in the *Navigatio* as

Menteith's service: *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum*, edd. J. M. Thomson and J. B. Paul, 11 vols. (Edinburgh 1882–1914) [*RMS*] i, no. 182.

²⁶Broun, *Irish Identity*, 130; *Chron. Fordun* i, 25; ii, 24; *Scotichronicon* i, edd. MacQueen and MacQueen, 69, 147–8. For the late-thirteenth-century strand in Fordun's chronicle, see chapter 2.

²⁷*Scotichronicon* i, edd. MacQueen and MacQueen, 69, 147–8; *Chron. Fordun* i, 25; ii, 24.

²⁸It is impossible to know whether there was some extant physical feature on Bute that was identified with Brendan's *both* (for instance the extensive ruins of Bláán's monastic enclosure at Kingarth?). The 'Bute' tradition may have held that the island had been christianised by Brendan's mission, an interpretation which would have encouraged the well-attested devotion of the islanders to the saint in the period after 1300.

²⁹Carl Selmer, 'The vernacular translations of the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*: a bibliographical study', *Medieval Studies* 18 (1956) 145–57 [Selmer, '*Navigatio*];

an intrepid sailor-saint, passing from isle to isle in the course of his long voyage, may well have had a particular resonance for the inhabitants of the region, and especially for the Stewart magnates who sought to impose their lordship on the scattered island communities of the Firth of Clyde.³⁰ One name that could have suggested a connection between the Brendan tale and the Clyde was Inchmarnock, the island lying just off Bute and named from Saint Ernán.³¹ Intriguingly, Brendan's voyage in the *Navagatio* is inspired by the story told by the hermit Barrind on a visit to Brendan's monastery. Barrind narrates how he visited his godson Mernoc, who had founded an eremitical community on an island known as the Delightful Isle, and how the two men sailed west in a successful bid to find the Promised Land of the saints.³²

The international 'glamour' of the Brendan of the *Navigatio* and the appropriateness of his tale to the geography of the region may have been significant, but these factors hardly provide a full explanation as to why the Brendan cult was so readily developed. It would seem that the most significant factor underlying the success of

Benedeit; The Anglo-Norman Voyage of St Brendan, edd. I. Short and B. Merrilees (Manchester 1979), 1–6 [*Benedeit*, edd. Short and Merrilees].

³⁰A localisation of the Brendan tale in the Firth of Clyde would have provided a precedent for treating the islands as a historically linked unit.

³¹Watson, *The History of Celtic Place-Names*, 291–2.

³²*Benedeit*, edd. Short and Merrilees, 16–17, 85, 98. Walter Bower (writing 1441–7) describes Inchmarnock as *Insula Sancti Marnoci* (*Scotichronicon* i, edd. MacQueen and MacQueen, 15) and as 'Inchemernok' 'where there is a monks' cell' (*ibid.*, 187). There is nothing here, or in any extant local traditions, to suggest that an explicit association had been made with Mernoc, the godson of Barrind, but the coincidence of a 'Mernok's island' lying off the west coast of Brendan's *both* is interesting. Brendan's Life may also have appealed to the Stewart lords because it provided a number of links between their ancestral homeland in Brittany and their lordship in the Firth of Clyde. For example, one of Brendan's pupils, St Machutes, was the eponymous founder-saint associated with the Breton bishopric of St Malo: Selmer, 'Navigatio', 148–9; *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower in Latin and English*, gen. ed. D. E. R. Watt, vol. ii, edd. and trans. John and Winifred MacQueen (Aberdeen 1989), 63; vol. iv, edd. and trans. David J. Corner, A. B. Scott, William W. Scott and D. E. R. Watt (Edinburgh 1994), 17.

the saint's cult was the sustenance and protection it received from the Stewart family, and that its growth was encouraged because it provided a powerful historical and ideological underpinning for Stewart ambitions and claims in the Firth of Clyde. Throughout the thirteenth century Stewart lordship in the region faced robust local opposition. Although the Stewarts had obtained physical control of Bute by *ca* 1200, their hold on the lordship was contested by the Norwegian crown, which claimed that the island was subject to its authority, and by a rather enigmatic local dynasty that may have been displaced by the Stewart advance.³³ Norwegian pretensions to overlordship in the Hebrides were backed up by major naval campaigns in 1230 and 1263 that targeted the islands of the Firth of Clyde. On both occasions the Stewart castle at Rothesay was attacked and taken by the Norse and their Hebridean allies.³⁴

Moreover, Bute and the neighbouring islands, including Arran, remained part of the diocese of Sodor (the Isles) and subject, in ecclesiastical terms, to the Norwegian province of Trondheim.³⁵ By the fourteenth century the competition between the Norwegian, Scots and English crowns in the Irish Sea had produced an entrenched threefold division of secular political authority within the Sodor diocese. In 1350, for example, copies of papal letters confirming the election of a new bishop by the clergy of the diocese had to be sent not only to the archbishop of Trondheim, but also to William Montague, lord of Man (subject to the English crown),

³³In 1263 King Haakon was able to leave the assault on Bute to one Ruaidhrí and his brothers who claimed to have a hereditary right to the island. Intriguingly, men using the designation 'of Bute' witnessed charters issued by Aengus Mór MacDomhnaill in the first half of the thirteenth century. Sometime before the death of Alexander II (1249) Aengus issued a charter in favour of Paisley Abbey which was witnessed by one Fearchar 'Nigilli de Buyt'. Another of Aengus' charters was attested by Fearchar 'de Buit' and his brother Donnchadh. *Paisley Reg.*, 127–8.

³⁴Anderson, *Early Sources* ii, 471–7, 620–1.

³⁵A. D. M. Barrell, *The Papacy, Scotland and Northern England, 1342–1378* (Cambridge 1995), 187.

Robert Stewart, lord of Bute, and Eoin MacDomhnaill, lord of Islay.³⁶ In a thoroughly fragmented diocese with a weak ecclesiastical structure (where bishops could often represent 'hostile' political interests), the dominant secular lords seem to have attempted to associate their authority with saints' cults that gave religious expression to the territories over which they held sway. For many in the Hebrides the most important focus for devotion was St Columba.³⁷ In the middle of the thirteenth century Columba was invoked as the spiritual guardian of the political interests of the Norse crown and Hebridean lords opposed to the advance of the influence of the Scottish crown in the west; according to Haakon's saga, Columba was the final and most threatening of the three saints who appeared in a dream to warn Alexander II of the consequences if he continued his campaign of 1249 against Argyll and the Isles. Needless to say Alexander ignored this timely advice and had the predictable misfortune to die on Kerrera in mid-expedition.³⁸

The status of Columba as an icon for the political adversaries of the Stewart family in and around the Firth of Clyde may well have been a spur to the cultivation of Brendan as a rallying point for the

³⁶*Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters*, edd. W. H. Bliss *et al.*, 18 vols. to date (London/Dublin 1893–) [CPL] iii, 279. The tensions engendered by the opening of the wars of independence would have put further strain on the fragile unity of the diocese of the Isles. The importance of the Steward's lordship of Rothesay as the principal Scottish stronghold in the diocese was emphasised by the burial of two successive 'Scottish' bishops of the Isles in St Mary's kirk in Rothesay in the 1320s. Andrew (d. 1321) witnessed at least one charter by Walter the Steward (*ca* 1320) dealing with lands in Bute: *Chronica Regum Manniae et Insularum* ed. P. A. Munch (Christiania 1860), 30; *Chronicon Regum Mannie et Insularum, Chronicles of the Kings of Man and the Isles*, BL Cotton Julius A vii, ed. George Broderick, 2nd edn. ([Douglas] 1996), fo. 51v; *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae Medii Aevi, ad annum 1638*, rev. edn., edd. D. E. R. Watt and A. L. Murray (Edinburgh 2003), 262.

³⁷*Paisley Reg.*, 125–6. Grants by Ragnhall son of Somhairle and Ragnhall's son Domhnall to the monastery of Paisley invoked St Columba's curse on any who disrupted the terms of the gift or otherwise harmed the monks and monastery.

³⁸Anderson, *Early Sources* ii, 556–7; *Chronica de Mailros*, ed. Joseph Stevenson (Bannatyne Club: Edinburgh 1835), 177–8.

Stewarts' Gaelic adherents. The way in which the cults of Columba and Brendan ebbed and flowed according to the changing fortunes of the political lordships associated with the saints may be hinted at in the history of Skipness castle in Knapdale. Until the second half of the thirteenth century Clann Shuibhne (the MacSweens) controlled Skipness and maintained a chapel dedicated to St Columba near to the stronghold. However, late in the thirteenth century the Stewart-Menteith lords of Knapdale and Arran ousted Clann Shuibhne from Knapdale, obtained possession of Skipness and rebuilt the castle compound, absorbing the existing Columban chapel and apparently replacing it with one dedicated to St Brendan.³⁹ The fact that the commemoration of St Columba was deliberately expunged from the calendar of the thirteenth-century Paris Psalter produced for a patron with connections to Argyll, Cowal and Bute, is also suggestive of some antipathy toward Columba on the part of one subsequent owner of the book. Since, however, it is impossible to determine even an approximate date for the obliteration of Columba's name, it would be dangerous to assume that the context for the deletion was political tension and rivalry in late medieval Argyll.⁴⁰

By the opening of the fourteenth century it was clear that devotion to St Brendan was virtually synonymous with residence on Bute and loyalty to the Stewart lords of the island. So close was the association that fourteenth-century sources simply began to describe the inhabitants of Bute as 'Brendans' in recognition of their collective devotion to the saint.⁴¹ In the fourteenth century the term

³⁹*RCAHMS, Argyll (Kintyre)* i, 116 (no. 277), 165–78 (no. 314); *Paisley Reg.*, 120–1.

⁴⁰Oxford, Bodl. MS Douce 50, fo. xii'. The name of the saint has been erased, leaving 'sancti' and the description 'confessoris' untouched on either side of the erasure. As Columba was one of the three Irish saints originally picked out in red ink (alongside Brendan and Fintán) the individual or ecclesiastical community that first commissioned the psalter clearly venerated the saint. This makes the subsequent obliteration of Columba from the calendar even more curious.

⁴¹Thus, according to Scottish sources, a Sir John Stewart was killed at the battle of Falkirk in 1298 'cum Brendanis': *Chron. Fordun* i, 330. However, the near contemporary English chronicler, Walter of Guisborough, mentions a Sir John Stewart leading a contingent of bowmen from Selkirk forest during the battle: *The*

was evidently widely understood and in common use both within and outwith Scotland. When northern English chroniclers commented on the army led into England by Robert I on the Byland campaign of 1322, they noted that it was made up of 'Scots, Brendans and Islesmen'.⁴² The Brendans made their most sustained and heroic appearance in an anonymous Scottish chronicle of the 1390s that was later incorporated into the work of Andrew of Wyntoun and Walter Bower. After the disastrous defeat of Scottish armies at the battles of Dupplin (1332) and Halidon Hill (1333) the then lord of Bute, the sixteen-year-old Robert the Steward (the future Robert II) saw his lands and lordships, including Bute and Cowal, occupied by men acting on behalf of Edward Balliol and the English crown. In 1334 Robert attempted to reclaim his patrimony and launched a successful assault on Dunoon castle in Cowal. The inhabitants of Bute, aware of Robert's presence in the Firth of Clyde, rose in a spontaneous revolt against the pro-Balliol sheriff, killing him and many of his men at the so-called 'Batal Dormange' (*Batail nan Doirneag*), 'Battle of the

Chronicle of Walter of Guisborough, ed. Harry Rothwell (Camden Series: London 1957), 328. It is, of course, possible that there were two entirely different John Stewarts involved in the conflict. See also *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower in Latin and English*, gen. ed. D. E. R. Watt, vol. vi, edd. and trans. Norman F. Shead, Wendy B. Stevenson, and D. E. R. Watt *et al.* (Aberdeen 1991), 97; vol. vii, edd. and trans. A. B. Scott and D. E. R. Watt *et al.* (Edinburgh 1996), 105; *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, ed. F. J. Amours, 6 vols. (Scottish Texts Society: Edinburgh 1903–14) [*Chron. Wyntoun* (Amours)] v, 316–17.

⁴²'exercitus Scottorum, *Brandanorum* et Insulanorum': *Chronicon Monasterii de Melsa*, ed. Edward A. Bond, 2 vols. (Rolls Series: London 1866–7) ii, 346; *Chronicon de Lanercost*, ed. Joseph Stevenson (Bannatyne and Maitland Clubs: Edinburgh 1839), 247. In the section covering the Byland campaign the printed 'Lanercost' in fact reflects a chronicle probably composed in a Franciscan house in Carlisle: see Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, 2 vols. (London 1974–82) ii, 12–13, 101, 115. Both chronicles saw the Brendans as a quite distinct element in the Scottish army, distinguishing them from the Scots recruited from both sides of the Scottish sea (the Forth) and the Islesmen, e.g. *Chronicon de Lanercost*, ed. Stevenson, 247: 'Post reditum autem regis Anglie, congregavit rex Scotie totam fortitudinem suam citra mare Scoticanum et ultra, et de Insulis et *Brandanis*, et in crastino post festum Sancti Michaelis [September 30] intravit Angliam apud Solewath'.

Casting Stones', and sending his head to the Steward.⁴³ It seems likely that the Brendans' rebellion and the defeat of Balliol's men occurred on or around the feast of St Brendan on 16 May.⁴⁴ After 1334, the anniversaries of Brendan and *Batail nan Doirneag* may well have been bound together in an annual celebration of the sacred and secular ties that underpinned Stewart lordship in the island. The Steward certainly displayed affection for the islanders and their saint for the remainder of his long life. As a reward for their loyalty in 1334 the Brandans asked to hold their lands from the Steward free of multure duty and 'this he [the Steward] granted gratefully, and as long as he lived he embraced them with great favour'.⁴⁵ More striking is the fact that, even after he became king in 1371, Robert regularly returned to Bute in the month of May, probably to participate in the celebration of the feast of Brendan and the anniversary of the conflict of 1334 and, on occasion, combining these events with observance of the great festival of 'Pasche' (Easter) when the latter fell in May.⁴⁶

The localisation of the Brendan cult on Bute was not the only way in which precedents were found for the prominence of Stewart lordship in the Firth of Clyde. An account (probably written late in the thirteenth century) of the conclusion of the Treaty of Perth between the Norse and the Scots in 1266, suggests that the agreement (which saw the Norwegian king receive payment for

⁴³*Chron. Wyntoun* (Amours) vi, 42–3; Stephen. I. Boardman, *The Early Stewart Kings: Robert II and Robert III 1371–1406* (East Linton 1996), 4–5.

⁴⁴Bute was evidently in the young lord's possession by 25 May 1334, when Robert issued a charter from the island; *Highland Papers*, ed. MacPhail iv, 11. This was nine days after the feast of St Brendan. The battle was given the title because the Bute men defeated their opponents by bombarding them with stones. Presumably the Brendans employed slings, an effective form of missile warfare that was also deployed in larger and more formal Scottish hosts. See G. W. S. Barrow, 'The army of Alexander III's Scotland', in *Scotland in the Reign of Alexander III*, ed. Norman H. Reid (Edinburgh 1990), 132–147, at 139.

⁴⁵*Scotichronicon* vii, edd. Scott, Watt *et al.*, 105.

⁴⁶Boardman, *Early Stewarts*, 94. On at least some of these occasions Robert's stay on Bute also coincided with the celebration of Easter.

abandoning his claims to the 'islands between Scotland and Ireland') was resented by many because 'the Scots had inhabited the foresaid islands for a very long time before they came to Britain when they were brought there by Eochaid Rothay, one of their leaders; and undisturbed by any incursion, they had held them in uninterrupted possession right up to that ill-fated time of strife between the sons of Malcolm Canmore king of Scotland and Donald Ban, the uncle of the said sons'.⁴⁷ As Dauvit Broun has shown, Eochaid 'Rothay' was a ghost figure resulting from a mistranscription of a genealogy in the twelfth century. His name was subsequently used (certainly before the end of the thirteenth century) as an explanation for the origin of the name Rothesay.⁴⁸ It is easy to see how this figure might have been deployed in the fight against Norse claims in the Clyde and elsewhere during the thirteenth century. As the observation on the 1266 agreement suggests, Eochaid 'Rothay' provided historical validation for the reclamation of the territories he and his descendants had held and which had subsequently been lost to the Norse and their supporters. Presumably, the Stewart lords of Rothesay made use of Eochaid 'Rothay' as a justification for their expansion in the Clyde in the thirteenth century and as a counter to Norse claims to superiority over Bute and Arran.⁴⁹

⁴⁷*Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower in *Latin and English*, gen. ed. D. E. R. Watt, vol. v, edd. and trans. Simon Taylor and D. E. R. Watt *et al.* (Aberdeen 1990), 351 (ultimately *Chron. Fordun* i, 301–2; ii, 297). See also *Scotichronicon* iii, edd. and trans. John MacQueen, Winifred MacQueen, and D. E. R. Watt (Edinburgh 1995), 87 (ultimately *Chron. Fordun* i, 223–4; ii, 213–14) where Magnus' expedition is seen to take control of islands 'which had previously belonged to Scotland by ancient right. For from the time of Eochaid Rothay ... the Scots possessed these islands continuously without interruption'.

⁴⁸Broun, *Irish Identity*, 88.

⁴⁹As the comment on the 1266 settlement implies, Eochaid 'Rothay' was especially useful in providing a precedent for Scottish control of the western islands which predated the late eleventh century and the supposed cession of the Western Isles to the Norse king Magnus Barelegs. It seems probable, therefore, that the Norse attempts to justify their dominion in the west concentrated heavily on Magnus' supposed expedition of 1098.

If the first Stewart king inherited his family's long and deep association with the Brendans of Bute and the Gaelic aristocracy of the Firth of Clyde, then the other links with Gaelic Scotland that he brought to the throne in 1371 were very much the product of his own lifetime. A notable feature of Robert's career before he became king was his rapid acquisition of a series of earldoms and lordships across central Scotland. Atholl, the Appin of Dull, Strath Tay, Strath Braan, Strathearn and Badenoch all came under Robert's control between 1342 and 1357, while in 1361 Robert's son, also Robert, acquired the earldom of Menteith through marriage.⁵⁰ It hardly needs to be emphasised that these were all Gaelic-speaking areas. Robert's own marital and romantic liaisons also tended to reflect his wide-ranging political and territorial interests in Gaelic Scotland. Robert's second wife, whom he married around 1355, was Euphemia, sister of William earl of Ross.⁵¹ Perhaps more important in terms of the functioning of the royal court after 1371 was the fact that Robert's most favoured mistress was Mariota, daughter of the lord of Cardeny (near Dunkeld) and Foss (near Loch Tummel).⁵² The marriage of Robert's daughter Margaret to Eoin MacDomhnaill lord of Islay in 1350 provided yet another connection to a major figure in Gaelic society.⁵³ Given Robert's position as a great lord within Gaelic Scotland it is hardly a surprise that in the 1360s, when David II's regime began to pass legislation aimed at making Highland areas more amenable to royal agents and taxation, the Steward was identified as one of the key intermediaries between the crown and the inhabitants of the west and north.⁵⁴

⁵⁰Boardman, *Early Stewarts*, 7, 11–12, 16.

⁵¹*Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Petitions to the Pope [CPP]*, vol. i, ed. W. H. Bliss (London 1896), 287; Boardman, *Early Stewarts*, 11.

⁵²*RMS* i, nos. 552, 729–731; *Highland Papers*, ed. MacPhail i, 111–12; *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, edd. J. Stuart *et al.*, 23 vols. (Edinburgh 1878–1908) [*ER*] ii, 557; *CPL* iv, 226.

⁵³*CPL* iii, 381.

⁵⁴*The Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland*, edd. T. Thomson and C. Innes, 12 vols. (Edinburgh 1814–75) [*APS*] i, 506–7.

After 1371 Robert showed little sign of abandoning his many ties to Gaelic Scotland. The itinerary of the king gives some credence to Froissart's observation that the first Stewart monarch spent an unusual amount of his time in the Highlands. There were significant recurring patterns in Robert's annual peregrinations around his kingdom. In May, as we have seen, the king was normally to be found back on Bute, presumably for the feast day of Brendan, or Easter, or both.⁵⁵ The regular crossings to the Firth of Clyde lordships resulted in the almost surreal status of Ardnail (Portencross) as the seventh most likely place for the issuing of royal charters between 1371 and 1390. In August Robert headed for Kindrochit castle and the hunting grounds of the Braes of Mar. The hunting seats of Highland Perthshire and Angus were also occasionally visited—Methven, Glen Finglas, Strath Braan, Glen Almond, Glen Shee, Glen Prosen—as well as Badenoch and the Cumbræes.⁵⁶ It is hard to escape a nineteenth- and twentieth-century view of any excursion away from established seats of administration in the lowlands as a form of leisure, a retreat from government. However, it would be well to remember the amount of judicial and political business that could be conducted by a medieval king in an informal context. If government was where the king and his household were, then Robert II's reign was one in which a sizeable swathe of Gaelic Scotland, stretching from the Firth of Clyde to the uplands of Mar, experienced direct, sustained and relatively friendly royal 'governance'. This may go some way to explaining the positive tone of traditional Highland tales attached to Robert II. It may be significant that Robert, given that he never acquired the iconic status that would have inspired his inclusion in stories not initially relating to him, appeared in these at all. The seventeenth-century *History of Clann Domhnaill* relates a curious story in which Robert II was first arrested and then given a

⁵⁵St Broc (1 May) and St Rónán (22 May) also had feast days in the same month.

⁵⁶See D. E. Meek, 'The Gaelic ballads of medieval Scotland', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 60 (1986–7) 47–72, at 52–6, for the interesting localisation of a Gaelic ballad concerning the death (during a hunt) of the Fian warrior Diarmaid Ua Duibhne to the area around Glen Shee *ca* 1400.

guard of honour by members of Clann Donnchaidh while he journeyed 'accompanied only by one gentleman (as often his manner was)'.⁵⁷ Although this is a problematic source and the tale is rather confused and full of stock motifs, there is nothing remotely improbable in the tradition of Clann Donnchaidh providing hospitality for Robert on intimate terms either before or after he became king. In the 1340s, when Robert the Steward obtained effective control of Strath Braan as bailie for the earl of Fife, the chief forester of the lordship, the man responsible for the maintenance of the overlord's hunting rights, was none other than Donnchadh mac Anndra, the head of Clann Donnchaidh.⁵⁸

Another tale of Robert II that may well have been grounded in reality described how the king was cured of a crippling leg injury by Fearchar the Leech, identified by John Bannerman as one of the Beaton medical kindred.⁵⁹ The king undoubtedly knew and approved of Fearchar's work, confirming a charter by his third son Alexander to Fearchar in 1379, and then granting him further lands in Strathnaver in December 1386.⁶⁰

Do we have indications of the work of other members of the Gaelic learned orders in and around Robert II's court? It has to be admitted that here the evidence is disappointingly slim. We know that Robert's father, Walter, had a harper ('harpour'), evidently a man of high status, who was mistakenly arrested in London in 1325

⁵⁷*Highland Papers*, ed. MacPhail i, 18–20. The History gives a wholly fabulous account of the origin of Clann Donnchaidh as an offshoot of Clann Domhnaill. While this hardly inspires confidence, the encounter with Robert II may originally have been a free-standing tale genuinely attached to a leader of Clann Donnchaidh.

⁵⁸National Archives of Scotland [NAS], Murthly Castle Muniments, GD 121/Box 4/Bundle 10/no. 3; Sir William Fraser, *The Red Book of Grandtully*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh 1868) i, 2–3, nos. 2–3; *RMSi*, App. 2., no. 1396.

⁵⁹J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, 4 vols. (Paisley 1890–3) ii, 379–80; John Bannerman, *The Beatons: a Medical Kindred in the Classical Gaelic Tradition* (Edinburgh 1986), 62.

⁶⁰NAS, RH 6/174 and 186.

while under safe conduct.⁶¹ But we search in vain for the names of harpists, poets and historians in the employ of the first Stewart king. The most serious gap, of course, is the lack of any extant evidence for Robert II acting as a patron for the production of Gaelic literature. We can, of course, legitimately ask whether we should expect any such work to survive. The corpus of Gaelic poetry is certainly not replete with work produced at the behest of fourteenth-century Scottish patrons. Moreover, such material as does survive is usually preserved in sixteenth- or seventeenth-century collections.⁶² If Robert, lord of Bute, was the subject of Gaelic praise poems it is difficult to see these being lovingly re-recorded for posterity in the court of James V or James VI.

There is, however, one contemporary source that may give some indication of the early Stewart court's familiarity with Gaelic tales and literature. John Barbour's *Bruce*, one of the landmarks in the development of vernacular Scots as a literary language, is also interesting for the attitudes it displays towards the Gaelic world. While the work is dominated by the affairs of Lowland magnates, particularly Sir James Douglas, it makes some interesting and illuminating diversions into Highland Scotland. One general point can be made about Barbour's work: the sour and pejorative comments on the Gael typical of Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon*, for example, are simply not to be found. Barbour's observations on the social customs of Argyll and Ireland are well informed, dispassionate, and entirely divorced from the clerical intellectual framework that presented the Gael as lying on the wrong side of the division between civilisation and barbarity.⁶³ Barbour's work also raises more

⁶¹ *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*, ed. J. Bain, 4 vols. (Edinburgh 1881–8) iii, 871.

⁶² Most notably the sixteenth-century *Book of the Dean of Lismore*. See *Scottish Verse from the Book of the Dean of Lismore*, ed. William J. Watson (Scottish Gaelic Texts Society: Edinburgh 1937).

⁶³ The impartial commentary provided by Barbour (through his sources?) is exemplified by the way in which the notably unchivalric battlefield tactics of the native Irish lords supporting Edward Bruce in 1315–18 are explained. See Katherine

specific questions, notably in relation to the author's sources for episodes set in Highland Scotland. Barbour's selection of tales and his interpretation of the history of the early fourteenth century seem to have been heavily influenced by the political and social interests of his Stewart patron. Barbour's narrative of Robert I's escape from his pursuers in 1306–7, for example, lauds the critical role of Niall Caimbeul and Aengus Óg MacDomhnaill, neither of whom is mentioned in the account of the same episode provided in *Gesta Annalia*.⁶⁴ Niall's grandson, Gill-easbuig Caimbeul of Lochawe, was one of Robert II's most committed adherents, while Aengus' son Eoin MacDomhnaill of Islay was, in 1375, the king's son-in-law.⁶⁵ Moreover, Barbour was surely putting forward Robert II's vision of MacDomhnaill co-operation with the crown late in the fourteenth century when he named Aengus Óg as the leader of men from the Isles (and possibly Kintyre and Argyll) in the division commanded by Bruce himself at the battle of Bannockburn.⁶⁶ One of the intriguing sub-themes of Barbour's epic, the great feud between Bruce and Eoin MacDubhghaill of Lorn, also seems to have been

Simms, 'Warfare in the medieval Gaelic lordships', *The Irish Sword* 12 (1975–6) 98–108, at 98.

⁶⁴*Barbour's Bruce*, edd. Matthew P. McDiarmid and James A. C. Stevenson, 3 vols. (Scottish Text Society: Edinburgh 1980–5) [*Barbour's Bruce*, edd. McDiarmid and Stevenson] ii, 59–60 (III, ll. 385–404), 66 (III, ll. 571–4), 69 (III, ll. 659–79).

⁶⁵Gill-easbuig openly acknowledged his dependence on Robert the Steward as a regional lord in the Firth of Clyde in the pre-1371 period. The description of Aengus as 'lord and ledar off Kyntyre' and possessor of the castle of Dunaverty is also interesting, since the lordship of Kintyre had been in dispute between the Stewarts and Clann Domhnaill for most of the fourteenth century. Barbour's acknowledgement of the status of Aengus as lord of Kintyre presumably cannot predate Eoin MacDomhnaill's settlement of the dispute with Robert the Steward in or around 1350.

⁶⁶*Barbour's Bruce*, edd. McDiarmid and Stevenson iii, 14 (XI, ll. 339–43). See Sonja Cameron, 'Keeping the customer satisfied: Barbour's *Bruce* and a phantom division at Bannockburn', in *The Polar Twins*, edd. Edward J. Cowan and Douglas Gifford (Edinburgh 1999), 61–74, for an illustration of how Barbour manipulated his account to give greater prominence and honour to men whose descendants were influential in the 1370s.

heavily influenced by the concerns of the 1370s. Eoin MacDubhghaill, who emerges in the work as the king's most relentless and implacable foe, had a grandson (also Eoin) who was partly restored to the MacDubhghaill lordship in the west by David II in the 1350s. The younger Eoin had thereafter made himself obnoxious to Robert the Steward, a fact that may well have contributed to Barbour's hostile depiction of the conduct of the MacDubhghaill lord's ancestor earlier in the century.⁶⁷

Ironically, it is the material apparently written from the viewpoint of Eoin MacDubhghaill and his followers that provides the clearest indication of Barbour's familiarity with a Gaelic source. Barbour's account of Bruce's heroic conduct after he and his men were ambushed by Eoin and a great force of 'barownys off Argyle' at the head of the river Tay is particularly interesting. The reported speech of the exasperated lord of Lorn as Bruce thwarted the ambush compares the king's exploit to a feat of Goll mac Morna in his struggle against Fionn mac Cumhaill.⁶⁸ Intriguingly, the reference to two heroes of the Fenian cycle receives no further elaboration from Barbour. We would be left to conclude that the poet assumed all his audience was familiar with the story if it were not for the fact that he then provides what he describes as a more appropriate (*mar manerlik*) analogy for Bruce's bravery in the behaviour of Gadifer of Laris (from the *Roman d'Alixandre*).⁶⁹ In addition, at this point in

⁶⁷S. I. Boardman, 'The tale of Leper John and the Campbell acquisition of Lorn', in *Alba. Celtic Scotland in the Middle Ages*, edd. Edward J. Cowan and R. Andrew McDonald (East Linton 2000), 219–47, at 231–2.

⁶⁸*Barbour's Bruce*, edd. McDiarmid and Stevenson ii, 48 (III, ll. 67–70).

⁶⁹*Ibid.* ii, 48–9 (III, ll. 73–92); i, 73 (notes). Although apparently simply grading the relative dignity and worth of the two stories, Barbour's intervention may have been intended to highlight a better-known parallel tale, effectively providing an explanation of the reference for those unfamiliar with the story of Goll mac Morna. MacDubhghaill's use of a literary analogy which Barbour felt compelled to cross-reference raises the possibility that the poet was dealing, either directly or indirectly, with a written account. Alternatively, could Barbour have been familiar enough with the literary tastes of Highland magnates to have provided the Goll mac Morna allusion himself in order to have Eoin speak 'in character'?

Barbour's narrative what may have been an originally quite distinct tale about Bruce's handling of three brothers with the surname 'Makyne Drosser' [Mac an Dorsair], who were intent on assassinating the king, is incorporated in the description of the battle with Lorn's men. Barbour helpfully provides a Scots translation of the brothers' surname: 'That is al-so mekill to say her, As the Durwarth sonnys'.⁷⁰

How did these tales of Bruce from the Gaelic world find their way to Barbour? A MacDubhghaill source is certainly not impossible, although the critical view of Eoin of Lorn may make this seem unlikely.⁷¹ Significantly perhaps, the only adherent of Eoin MacDubhghaill named by Barbour is the 'baroune Maknaughtan' whose sole contribution to the narrative is to wax lyrical about the prowess of Bruce, much to MacDubhghaill's annoyance, while the king was gleefully dispatching Lorn's men to an early grave. There was a MacNeachdainn connection to Robert II's court through the family of the king's mistress, Mariota of Cardeny. At some point before 1385 Mariota, or perhaps an unidentified sister of Mariota's, had a child, Domhnall, by a MacNeachdainn lord.⁷² In short,

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 49–51 (III, ll. 93–146).

⁷¹A potential candidate is Dubhghall *de Ergadia* or 'of Lorn', almost certainly a scion of the Lorn family, who witnessed transactions involving Eoin MacDubhghaill in 1371, but who by 1380 was chaplain and secretary to Robert II's son, Robert, earl of Fife and Menteith. Dubhghall went on to become bishop of Dunblane: D. E. R. Watt, *A Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Graduates to A.D. 1410* (Oxford 1977), 359–60; *CPP* i, 554.

⁷²Robert of Cardeny, bishop of Dunkeld, is said to have obtained his bishopric through the influence of his sister. It is assumed this means he was the brother of Robert II's mistress Mariota. Domhnall MacNeachdainn was Bishop Robert's nephew *ex sorore*. The deduction that Mariota was Domhnall's mother is reasonable, but he could equally have been the son of another of Robert's sisters. Domhnall's likely date of birth shortly before 1385 means that the MacNeachdainn/Cardeny liaison cannot be dated with certainty to the period in which Barbour was working on *The Bruce*, but he may not have been the couple's eldest child: Watt, *Biographical Dictionary*, 80–1, 368–70; Alexander Myln, *Vitae Dunkeldensis Ecclesiae Episcoporum*, ed. Thomas Thomson, rev. ed. Cosmo Innes (Bannatyne Club: Edinburgh 1831), 16–18; *Extracta e Variis Cronicis Scocie*, ed. W. B. D. D. Turnbull (Abbotsford Club: Edinburgh 1842), 204, 235.

Barbour's stories of Bruce in the Highlands seem to have been designed to flatter and please Robert II's friends and allies in the region and discredit his enemies, and it is more than possible that they were gathered by Barbour in and around the royal court. The notion that the early Stewart court acted, in some senses, as a conduit by which tales of Gaelic Scotland found their way into Lowland literature is strengthened by the inclusion of details of Robert II's hosting on the Clyde in 1334 and the triumph of the Brendans of Bute at *Batail nan Doirneag* in the anonymous (but distinctly pro-Stewart) chronicle composed shortly after Robert II's death in 1390.⁷³

The royal dynasty's links to Gaelic Scotland were not severed as a result of Robert II's demise. The king's son Robert, duke of Albany, constructed a territorial empire that embraced Lennox, Glen Dochart and Menteith, and Ross in the north, while one of his daughters married the Caimbeul lord of Argyll, and another married the Stewart lord of Lorn. Albany's position as governor or guardian of the kingdom for much of the period between 1388 and his death in 1420 meant that a figure with extensive interests inside Gaelic Scotland continued to direct the affairs of the crown. If the 'Great Ill-will of the Lowlander' was a significant cultural and political force in early Stewart Scotland, then it hardly seems a phenomenon that was actively promoted and encouraged by those who wielded royal power between 1371 and 1424. The return of James I to Scotland in 1424 and his subsequent destruction of the Albany family may have marked a significant shift in the relationship between the Stewart dynasty and Gaelic Scotland, but this case remains to be made rather than assumed.⁷⁴ The emergence after 1424 of a more active, aggressive and ambitious style of kingship was allied to the waning of the personal ties of residence and kinship that had bound Robert

⁷³S. I. Boardman, 'Chronicle propaganda in fourteenth-century Scotland: Robert the Steward, John of Fordun and the 'Anonymous Chronicle'', *Scottish Historical Review* 76 (1997) 23–43.

⁷⁴Boardman, *Early Stewarts*, 181–5, 257–8, 306–11; Michael Brown, *James I* (Edinburgh 1994), chaps. 1–3.

II and the Albany Stewarts to Gaelic Scotland. Moreover, James' innate suspicion of those areas associated with Albany lordship was combined with an increasing emphasis on the projection of royal power through the imposition of uniform administrative, legal, and bureaucratic systems on all the regions of the kingdom. The models for these systems were all drawn from the relationship between the crown and the inhabitants of the more intensively governed south and east of the kingdom; inevitably the language and culture of this region was also taken to be the preferred norm. The Stewart monarchy of the late fifteenth century saw less room for the diversity of great regional lordships, both Highland and Lowland, that had been the hallmark of the period 1371–1424; the cultural eclecticism of Robert II and the Albanys was gradually replaced by a far more assertive and prescriptive regime. Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon* (1441–7), written shortly after James I's death, suggests a new rancour in the relationship between the royal establishment and the Gael, and the stigmatisation of the latter as an inveterate rebel and defier of the king's laws and government. These were themes that would be taken up by many others in the years to follow.⁷⁵

⁷⁵Yet it might be unwise to let the abbot of Inchcolm stand as the only or most reliable witness to the relationship between the royal house and Gaelic Scotland after 1424. The legislation of a parliament held by James I in 1427, for example, betrayed sentiments and sensitivities that sit oddly with Bower's haughty dismissal of the Gaels of Scotland and Ireland. Anxious about the possible return to Scotland of an exiled Albany Stewart rebel with substantial Irish and Hebridean military support, King James issued instructions for the restriction of shipping between Scotland and Ireland. The royal deputies appointed to enforce the regulation of shipping contacts were commanded to make clear to those affected, 'that this [action] is not done for hatred nor breaking of the alde frendship betuix the king of Scotlande and his liegis ande the gude alde frendis of Erschry of Irelande but only to eschew the perils forsaid': *APS* ii, 11. Although the declaration could have been largely inspired by royal insecurity and or representations and complaints made in the parliament, it nonetheless reveals an administration anxious to avoid alienating the King's 'liegis' in Gaelic Scotland.

Highlands and Lowlands in Late Medieval Tuscany¹

SAMUEL K. COHN J^{NR}

On first perception, comparison of lowlanders' prejudices against their highland neighbours in Tuscany and Scotland suggests that these same stereotypes may have been universal throughout Western Europe during the late middle ages and early modern period. From Fordun's chronicle to Enlightenment Scotland, the highlander was depicted as ignorant, brutish, impoverished, violent—in short not far removed from the animals they grazed. As Fernand Braudel² and Giovanni Cherubini³ have shown, Italian sources from chronicles to humanist commentary were rich in mocking condemnation of their highlanders, both in their sylvan settings and when they ventured down to the cities in search of work.

One Tuscan source yet to be examined for such urban views of mountain people is the story (*novella*) by the Sienese notary Gentile Sermini written about the time of the plague of 1424. More than a

¹The materials for this essay come largely from my *Creating the Florentine State: Peasants and Rebellion, 1348–1434* (Cambridge 1999).

²See his *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds, 2 vols. (New York 1972–3) (published originally in French in 1949) i, 41–60.

³Cherubini has written numerous articles on the Tuscan mountains; among these, see 'Appunti sul brigantaggio in Italia alla fine del medioevo', in *Studi di storia medievale e moderna per Enesto Sestan*, 2 vols. (Florence 1980) i, 103–33; 'La "civiltà" del castagno in Italia alla fine del Medioevo', *Archeologia Medievale* 8 (1981) 247–80; *Una comunità dell'Appennino dal XIII al XV secolo: Montecoronaro dalla signoria dell'abbazia del Trivio al Dominio di Firenze* (Florence 1972); 'Paesaggio agrario, insediamenti e attività silo-pastorali sulla montagna toscano-romagnola alla fine del medioevo', in *Fra Tevere, Arno e Appennino. Valli, comunità, signori* (Florence 1992), 39–69; 'Risorse, paesaggio ed utilizzazione agricola del territorio della Toscana sud-occidentale nei secoli XIV–XV', in *Civiltà ed economia agricola in Toscana nei secc. XIII–XIV: Problemi della vita delle campagne nel tardo medioevo* (Pistoia 1981), 91–115; 'San Godenzo nei suoi statuti quattrocenteschi', in *Fra Tevere, Arno e Appennino*, 145–65; 'La società dell'Appennino settentrionale (secoli XIII–XV)', in *Signori, contadini, borghesi: Ricerche sulla società italiana del basso medioevo* (Florence 1974), 130–1.

story, it is a primitive ethnography of the mountain people south of Siena, probably Monte Amiata.⁴ To escape the plague, Sermini fled to the supposedly more salubrious air of the mountains where he visited an old friend, the village's parish priest, Ser Cecco from the city of Perugia. There Sermini lived with the villagers and described their habits and manners. However, unlike the modern anthropologist (at least in principle), he made no attempt to study these people in their own terms, to shed the prejudices of his own culture. Part of Sermini's scorn for these people is that they knew nothing of the city and its *mores*, and therefore talked, dressed, and acted in an uncivilised manner. He mocks their speech and crude language and includes in his *novella* an ode to the mountain villagers, which is a cacophony of animal noises. He ends his treatment of each subject, be it mountain hair style or cuisine, with the same refrain: 'little separated these men from the beasts they governed'. In fact, they became indistinguishable. His mountain hosts were oily and unwashed; the stench of warmed feet was enough to cause one to commit suicide or kill one's brother. Further fetid smells came out of their mouths from the disgusting, bitter things they ate—garlic, leeks, and radishes. Their hair was oily and beards shorn only twice a year with 'scissors for castrating [sheep]', which left them appearing like the billy goats they bred. They were clothed badly, possessing only a single pair of worn-out underwear, and shod even worse. Their hovels were dark, dirty, and oily, filled with the fumes of their animals and the stench of human manure. These highlanders were greedy and ready to cheat at every opportunity on the halves they owed their landlords.

Some of the most striking passages of this account concern the mountain villagers' religious practices and attitudes—their fear of crossing the threshold of the church, and when they did, their screams of joy at particularly solemn points in the mass, and their anguish and torment at the more celebratory moments. Their pounding of their chests, yanking of their hair, hands shoved down their mouths, raised

⁴*Le Novelle di Gentile Sermini da Siena*, ed. F. Vigo (Livorno 1874), 169–81 (XII, 'L'autore e ser Cecco da Perugia').

arms and bellows and alienation from their parish priest suggests that Christ may not have reached the mountains of fifteenth-century Tuscany. Sermini concludes his account by lamenting that it would have been better to have died in the 1424 plague in civilized Siena 'than to have died a thousand times every day' with these beasts of the mountains who had never seen a city.⁵

While students of Scottish history are beginning to read educated lowlanders' descriptions of highlanders with considerable caution, more as a source about lowland mentality than about highland ethnography,⁶ historians of the Mediterranean and of Italy have been less chary, reading stories and interpreting urban slurs and commentary on their Mediterranean highlanders more or less at face value. For Braudel, mountain communities were poor, self-sufficient, and egalitarian without sharp contrasts in the distribution of wealth. They were the backward and patriarchal refuge of outlaws, harbouring 'rough men, clumsy, stocky, and close-fisted'.⁷ Along with other niceties of urban culture, religion was here slow to penetrate. 'Sorcerers, witchcraft, primitive magic, and black masses were the flowerings of an ancient cultural subconscious'.⁸ Not only does Braudel's mountain civilization extend across the Mediterranean's vast basin and two continents without significant differences, it is also a near-timeless construct, reaching back to a Biblical pre-history and forward to the nineteenth century. Yet, despite Braudel's importance as the leader of a second generation of French historians centred around the journal *Les Annales*—known for its sociological modeling and quantification—he never sought to substantiate any of these conclusions with archival sources or quantitative evidence; instead he based his judgments solely on literary images, largely taken from elite urban authors.

Later, the historian of Tuscany Giovanni Cherubini went beyond such fragments to investigate the social structure of mountain

⁵I have elaborated on the religious aspects of Sermini's *novella* in 'Piety and religious practice in the rural dependencies of Renaissance Florence', *EHR* 114 (1999) 1121–42.

⁶See the first and second essays in this collection.

⁷Braudel, *The Mediterranean* i, 46.

⁸*Ibid.*, 37.

communities. His panoramic surveys of mountain ecology and society extend from Monte Amiata in the southernmost corner of Tuscany to the mountains of Romagna on the southern watershed of the Po valley. Based on the remarkable tax record, the *catasto* of 1428–9, his analysis shows wide discrepancies in the social structure across the Florentine Apennines from the ‘dry mountains’ of the Casentino in the southeast, where the poor⁹ constituted 88.4 percent of taxpayers, to the Pistoiese mountains in the northwest, where its percentage fell by nearly half (46.2 percent). Here, those of middling wealth—the ‘mediani’—approached the poor in number (40.8 percent). But despite this wide range in wealth and its distribution, Cherubini chose not to challenge Braudel’s paradigm¹⁰ and instead dismissed the variations: ‘the presence of a few conspicuously wealthy individuals does not change the overall picture in which mountain egalitarianism is distinguished from the proletarianized peasants of the hills and plains’.¹¹ Yet he never supplied the figures to compare this ‘mountain egalitarianism’ with holdings lower down.¹²

I

Unlike the historian of Scotland for the late medieval and early modern periods, the historian of Tuscany has vast archival sources to test the veracity of contemporaries’ descriptions of their highland neighbours.

⁹Cherubini utilizes the categories of property-holding devised by Conti from the 1427 *catasto* (see *La formazione della struttura agraria moderna nel contado fiorentino* ii, 2 (Rome 1965), 243–5), which defines ‘the poor’ as property-holders with taxable wealth between 1 and 50 florins as opposed to the *miserabili* without any taxable property.

¹⁰See his *Una comunità*, 170: ‘Una cosa pare comunque sicura: l’ “equalitarismo” sociale che distingue la montagna rispetto alle pianure dominate dalle città pare anche qui provato.’

¹¹Cherubini, ‘La società dell’Appennino’, ‘Qualche considerazione’, and *Una comunità dell’Appennino*, 127 and 170.

¹²At times Cherubini describes the mountain villagers as desperately impoverished; see for instance his ‘Appunti sul brigantaggio’, esp. 121. From the eighth to the thirteenth century, Chris Wickham has found that while estates may have been smaller in the mountains, ‘no backward egalitarian pastoralists’ filled the mountains of the Garfagnana; C. Wickham, ‘Economic and social institutions in Northern Tuscany in the eighth century’, in *Istituzioni ecclesiastiche della Toscana medievale*, ed. C. Wickham, M. Ronzani, Y. Milo, and A. Spicciari (Galatina 1980), 7–34, at 12.

In particular, numerous and detailed tax registers permit us to compare the social structure of mountain hamlets with villages in the hills or plains and to test whether these structures formed a *histoire immobile*. They also allow us to go beyond the usual binary division of city v. countryside. The distribution of wealth in the communities of Florence's hinterland do not show an egalitarianism founded in poverty or that the highlanders' 'poverty', either relative to the plainsmen or in absolute terms, remained relatively constant over time. Instead, from the earliest surviving tax records in the 1360s and 1370s, mountain peasants possessed property of values equal to those in the plains, and the distribution of this property within their communities was no more equal than that found in the lowlands and hills. However, with increasing warfare (largely centred in the mountains) and the decision of the Florentine elites to impose an increasingly disproportionate burden of their escalating taxation on highlanders to fight the wars against Milan, mountain communities became severely impoverished vis-à-vis the lowlands by the last decade of the fourteenth century. But it was tax policy and not the ruggedness of the mountain ecology that brought on this poverty, ultimately causing these peasants to flee their homelands and to migrate across the borders into the territories of Bologna, Modena, and sometimes further afield.¹³

Moreover, after the wars with Milan and successful peasant resistance in the mountains to Florentine taxation, Florence changed its tax policy and with it the highlanders began once again to prosper. By the 1460s their wealth had increased seven-fold since the military crisis of 1400; they had become the wealthiest peasants within the *contado* of Florence, on average twice as wealthy as peasants in the plains living near the city of Florence.

Furthermore, the tax records allow us to venture beyond notions of wealth and poverty in the countryside. While literacy cannot be easily gleaned from the archival records for country people before the eighteenth century, to a certain degree numeracy can be estimated. The Florentine tax records (*estimi*) of 1371 are the first records I know in

¹³For the statistics to substantiate these conclusions, see Cohn, *Creating the Florentine State*, chs. 2 and 3.

Europe to list ages of all household members. In this survey the extent of age rounding was extreme, but over time rural numeracy rapidly improved. As measured by the reporting and rounding of ages to ten- or five-year clusters, no significant differences separated those from the mountains, plains, or suburbs next to Florence's city walls in 1371, except that mountain dwellers were even slightly more numerate than those in the plains and nearer the city. By 1487, however, the numeracy of highlanders had improved. Now they were as numerate as the urban population of Prato.¹⁴ This stands to reason, since those in the mountains dealt directly and daily in market exchanges, selling their animals and engaging in interregional business networks. They were forced to deal with numbers as part of their daily survival.¹⁵ By contrast, increasingly through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries urban investors acquired lands in the plains near Florence, and placed them under the *mezzadria* system (sharecropping contracts) in which urban agents kept the accounts. And while Prato was a bustling mercantile town at the end of the fourteenth century, a hundred years later it was little more than a rural market centre.

Another indirect source that historians have recently employed to study the diffusion of religious and cultural leanings has been changes in given names.¹⁶ But historians have yet to dissect the Florentine

¹⁴In 1371, 242 of 287 (84 percent) who reported their ages rounded them in the plains, while 175 of 215 (81 percent) did so in the mountains. In 1487 those from the city of Prato rounded their ages in 35 percent (37 of 106) and those in the mountains in 39 percent (142 of 363) of cases. Even if this reporting depended solely on the notary (which is hard to imagine), it would nonetheless reflect changes in the local intelligentsia, which at least before 1427 depended on local notaries.

¹⁵Federigo Melis, 'Momenti dell'economia del Casentino nei secoli XIV e XV', in Melis, *Industria e commercio nella Toscana medievale*, ed. Bruno Dini (Florence 1989), 192–211, at 192.

¹⁶See Charles la Roncière, 'L'influence des franciscains dans la campagne de Florence au XIVe siècle (1280–1360)', *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome: Moyen âge-Temps modernes*, 87 no.1 (1975) 27–103, esp. 28, and 'Orientations pastorales du clergé, fin du XIIIe–XIVe siècle: le témoignage de l'onomastisme toscane', in *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres. Comptes-rendus des séances de l'année, 1983 janvier-mars* (Paris 1983), 43–65; David Herlihy, *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West*, ed. with intro. by Samuel K. Cohn Jr. (Cambridge, MA. 1997), 75–8, and 'The Josephine Waters Bennett Lecture: Tuscan names, 1200–1530', *Renaissance Quarterly* 41 (1988) 561–83.

territory into different zones or even to compare the city with its hinterland. Did mountain villagers retain their German and good-luck names such as Bonaguido or Dietisalvi longer than those in the plains? Was the impact of the Franciscans and Dominicans stronger in the plains with a rise in saints' names such as Francesco, Domenico, Antonio and the like, as well as a new vogue for older Christian names such as Giovanni?

Over the relatively short period 1365 to 1427, the naming practices do not suggest that the mountain dwellers of the Mugello or even distant places on the edge of Tuscany were isolated pockets cut off from or resistant to religious practices and piety emanating from the city. True, the earliest surviving *estimi* show the spread of Christian names in the mountain communes lagging behind the towns and the plains. While in the town of Prato and plains of Sesto the proportion of Christian names hovered around half in 1365, only 40 percent of first names in the mountain communes of Mangona and Montecuccoli were Christian, and the percentage declined further north towards the Futa pass. As late as 1394, the number of saints' names in San Martino a Castro was less than a third of all first names.

But by the *catasto* of 1427, a remarkable uniformity in naming practices had swept across much of the Florentine state. In Prato, Sesto, Mangona, Montecuccoli, and Castro, the number of Christian names comprised two-thirds of the first names of household heads. The percentage of Christian names in Mangona now even exceeded that of the city of Prato, and a place as far removed and as high up as Verghereto (at over 800 metres) attained roughly the same level of Christian first names as Sesto less than ten kilometers from Florence.¹⁷

Despite the constraints of notarial formulae and the presence of clerics at the bedside,¹⁸ last wills and testaments reveal the number and

¹⁷For a fuller discussion of these methods and conclusions, see Cohn, *Creating the Florentine State*, 39–40.

¹⁸For discussion of the pitfalls and possibilities of using testaments for assessing changes in mentality, see E. Le Roy Ladurie, 'Chaunu, Lebrun, Vovelle: the new history of death', in *idem*, *The Territory of the Historian*, trans. Ben and Siân Reynolds (Hassocks 1979) (originally published in French, 1973), 273–84; Samuel K. Cohn Jr., *The Cult of*

array of pious choices peasants made during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Although the survival of notarial books for the mountains was low compared with the plains near Florence, I have been able to collect sixty-four testaments of mountain dwellers north of Florence from the Mugello village of Sant'Agata (341m) to Bruscoli (765m) on the border of Bologna, and a second sample east of Florence in the Aretine highlands around Caprese (653m). To draw comparisons I have relied on samples taken from the massive records left by the Mazzetti family, who worked the parishes just west of the Florentine city walls in the region of Sesto, from the parishes of Quarto to Campi within a five-mile radius of Florence.

Despite what Sermini and humanists such as the Florentine Poggio Bracciolini¹⁹ may have suggested about mountain piety, the highlanders of fifteenth-century Florence appear from their testaments to have been more conventionally pious than those in the plains close to the city. Half of those from the plains (sixteen of thirty-two testators) left no pious bequests at all (after the requisite five to twenty *soldi* to the Cathedral of Santa Reparata and its sacristy).²⁰ By contrast, only five (of sixty-four) of those from the Florentine mountains refrained from giving something to the church or a recognized and institutionalized pious cause.

Nor do these differences emerge from differences in wealth. With few exceptions rural tenants with little landed property or other goods drew up these testaments; rarely did their legacies exceed five itemized bequests to both pious and non-pious beneficiaries. In fact, those who left nothing to charitable causes were not necessarily the poorest testators. The non-pious bequests in plainsmen's wills which

Remembrance: Six Renaissance Cities in Central Italy (Baltimore 1992), 11–17.

¹⁹See *Facezie di Poggio Bracciolini*, 2nd edn. (Rome 1885), which poked fun at the mountain people who resided in the Pratomagno above Terranuova, Poggio's birthplace.

²⁰It should not be assumed that this seeming rural detachment from the church (in comparison to that seen in urban wills) was the norm in late-medieval Europe. In mostly rural Forez (southern France) only 3 percent of testators left nothing to the church; see Marguerite Gonon, *Les Institutions et la société en Forez au XIV^e siècle d'après les testaments* (Mâcon 1960), 60.

bequeathed nothing to the church reveal substantial, even wealthy peasants with landed property and movables.²¹

To be sure, the wills do not allow us to observe church services and to witness whether or not mountain men rammed their fists down their throats and sang out without any idea of what was going on in the service or, as Poggio scoffs in one of his stories, did not even know when Easter fell.²² Nonetheless, the wills suggest that mountain piety was less flamboyant and egotistical than the growing 'Renaissance' piety of the cities. By the last quarter of the fourteenth century it was common for artisans and shopkeepers in Florence and Arezzo to leave concrete memorials for the preservation of their names and the memory of their ancestors in the form of burial tombs, paintings, and chapel foundations.²³ Urban testators could express such desires with legacies of as little as ten *lire*, well within the range of the expenditures found in these country wills. But those in the mountains seldom made any such concrete efforts to preserve their memories in works of art or even in contributions earmarked for specific building repairs to churches or hospitals.

Such urban legacies for works of art and chapels were made not only for the preservation of testators' own names and memories but, as importantly, for the memory and exaltation of their ancestors and family lineages.²⁴ Recent medieval historians of France, from Douai to Avignon, have assumed that the veneration of the ancestors had begun to vanish from urban wills in France and elsewhere in Western Europe by the thirteenth century or by the Black Death at the very latest, and

²¹See, for instance, Archivio di Stato, Firenze, Notarile Antecosimiano [not. antecos.], 13527, no pagination [np], document no. 44 (1417.ix.4); np, no.12 (1409.v.21); np, no.16 (1413.v.7); np, no.16; np, no.18 (1413.iii.4); np, no.28 (1417.vii.3); np, no.38 (1417.ix.4); np, no.59 (1420.ii.1). I have developed this argument further in my 'Piety and religious practice', 1121–42.

²²Bracciolini, *Facezie*, 20–1 (XI, 'Di un prete ignorava il giorno della solennità delle Palme').

²³See Cohn, *Cult of Remembrance*, chs. 6, 7, and 8; and *idem*, 'Piété et commande d'oeuvres d'art après la peste noire', *Annales. Histoire Sciences Sociales* 51 (1996) 553–71.

²⁴See my discussion of these testamentary commissions in Cohn, *Cult of Remembrance*, 242–3.

afterwards crop up only in backward and marginal rural areas.²⁵ But in Florentine Tuscany no such transition is seen. Instead, urban testators after 1348 and into the Quattrocento Renaissance turned in the opposite direction: increasingly, their last gifts concentrated on building, decorating, and maintaining communal family vaults and chapels, where priests were left property to pray for the souls of these testators' ancestors with perpetual masses. At the same time, testators in the mountains shunned any such concrete efforts to preserve their own memories or to recall those of their forbears.

This absence of 'pious egoism'²⁶ and ancestral veneration from rural wills did not result from a lack of funds or landed property. In place of demands for concrete works of art, improvements to church fabrics, and the foundation of family chapels to celebrate themselves and their lineages, mountain peasants (along with those further down the slopes) often left sizeable gifts of property, from several strips of land to entire farms (*poderi*) for the more ephemeral matter of the health of their souls alone, to be celebrated in masses at their funerals or soon afterwards, but rarely in perpetuity with complex cycles and flamboyant demands for different coloured waxes, candles, and torches of varying sizes.²⁷

Despite differences in mobility and social networks between highlanders and plainsmen, the parish church dominated the spiritual worlds of both groups in the *contadi* of Florence and Arezzo. Almost all these rural testators who specified a pious bequest gave something to

²⁵See Jean-Pierre Derégnaucourt, 'Autour de la mort à Douai: attitudes, pratiques et croyances, 1250/1500', 2 vols. Thèse de troisième cycle (Université Charles de Gaulle, Lille, 1993) i, 137–41; 'L'élection de sépulture d'après les testaments douaisiens (1295–1500)', *Revue du Nord* 65 (1983), 343–52, at 351; Jacques Chiffolleau, *La Comptabilité de l'au-delà: Les hommes, la mort et la religion dans la région d'Avignon à la fin du Moyen Âge (vers 1320–vers 1480)* (Rome 1980), esp. 206–7; and more generally, Michel Lauwers, *La mémoire des ancêtres, le souci des morts: Morts, rites et société au moyen âge* (Paris 1997), esp. 498–9. Also, see my 'The place of the dead in Flanders and Tuscany: towards a comparative history of the Black Death', in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, edd. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge 2000), 17–43.

²⁶So labeled by Derégnaucourt, 'Autour de la mort à Douai' i, 63–5.

²⁷See Cohn, 'Piety and religious practice'.

their own parish church or priest, and second in importance came the parish lay confraternity. The parish in the mountains, however, appears to have been a more vibrant centre of life, both spiritual and secular, than in the plains. Mountain people gave more often to their parishes, and unlike in the plains still possessed the *ius patronatus* of their churches. As a result of these peasants' right to elect their own priests, outsiders like the urban Ser Cecco in Sermini's account (who came even from a different territorial state from his host highlanders) were unheard of, at least in the mountains north of Florence, where notarial records of parish elections survive. Instead, mountain priests came from nearby parishes within the same mountains. No doubt the newly elected had connections with the parishioners whose communities they came to officiate, spoke with similar dialects and possessed similar manners.²⁸ By contrast, in the plains and lower hills, where the rights of election had rested within the hands of Florentine patricians or urban churches for a century if not more, the newly appointed priests came from outside. They moved to these villages either from lesser positions within the city of Florence or from larger market towns such as Empoli in the *contado*.²⁹

In addition, the parish appears stronger in the mountains than in the plains as a centre of village life beyond its religious functions. 'At the sound of their church bells', as the notarized convocations begin, mountain people regularly congregated in their parishes to carry out a wide range of social and civic business such as settlements of disputes with other parishes,³⁰ revisions of village statutes,³¹ discussions of civic

²⁸See for instance, not. antecos., 858, 18v–19r (1368.v.27); 19r–v (1368.v.20); 21v–22r (1368.xi.28); 792, 206v (1434.i.2).

²⁹Not. antecos., 13521, 33v (1373.ix.16); 792, 48v–50v. Charles la Roncière, 'Dans la campagne Florentine au xiv^e siècle: les communautés et leurs curés', in *Histoire vécue du peuple chrétien*, ed. J. Delumeau (Toulouse 1976), 281–314, at 291–2, claims that during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries parish priests in both the hills and plains came from villages either in or near the churches where they officiated.

³⁰See for instance the case when twenty-four men of San Giovanni a Cornacciaia met to settle a dispute and to initiate other matters not spelled out in the notary's rough draft; Not. antecos., 6599, 39r–40r (1440.x.30).

³¹See the numerous acts of submission in the *Provvizioni* registers and their transcriptions

issues and the initiation of litigation,³² the appointment of advisors to the parish or commune,³³ and most frequently the election of their own lay syndics.³⁴ Among other things, these syndics negotiated with the city of Florence on matters such as tax relief and indebtedness, and, at least until 1427, decided how their taxes were to be apportioned within the community.³⁵

This corporate identity based on the commune or parish can also be detected in the local statutes, and again was more marked in the mountains. Unlike the statutes of the city and plains, which limited the number of neighbours allowed to take part in funerals, local statutes for the mountains required the opposite—a full turnout. On the death of any neighbour over the age of 14, at least one member of the household in the parish or commune had to ‘honour the body’ of his neighbour, accompanying it from the home to the parish church, or else face a fine of from 5s to 10s.³⁶ Finally, in the mountains the parish church appears in the statutes as the point of organization for raising the hue and cry, and the meeting place for the commune and its councilors.³⁷ In the mountains north of Florence, ‘crossing the threshold’ of their own parish churches certainly was no mystery, as Sermini alleged had been the case in the mountains south of Siena.

in *I Capitoli del Comune di Firenze*, ed. Cesare Guasti, 2 vols. (Florence 1886).

³²Not. antecos., 858, 16r–17r (1368.v.5).

³³Not. antecos., 858, 6r (1366.v.4).

³⁴For the mountain commune of Montecuccoli, see not. antecos., 792, 99r (1431.viii.4) and 155r (1432.iii.1); for Montecarelli, see *ibid.*, 124r (1431.ii.14); for Casaglia ‘a pie d’alpe’ see *ibid.*, 157r (1432.iii.4); for San Giovanni a Firenzuola, see *ibid.*, 6599, 52v–53r; for Caburaccio, *ibid.*, 66v–67r; San Martino a Castro, *ibid.*, 73r; San Biagio a Petriolo, *ibid.*, 1502, 31r–v. The election of village syndics also took place in the plains; see for instance *ibid.*, 13534, 130v–31r, for San Cresci a Campi; and 13533, np (1365.v.25), np (1366.v.3), and np (1367.v.9) for Sesto.

³⁵Not. antecos., 13522, np (1365.vii.27); np (1365.viii.10); 1502, 31r–v; and 10423, np, no.6 (1414.iii.5).

³⁶Archivio di Stato Firenze, Statuti della comunità 420 Mangona (1416), c. 79, 42v; 7 Piancaldoli (1419), 2v; and 447 Montagna Fiorentina (1396), c. 29, 26r–v.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 7, 2v; 447, c. 34, 19v. Mountain statutes required one member per household to attend these meetings under the threat of 3s fine. I have not found similar statutes for the plains.

II

From the specification of ages, evidence of names, and testimony from last wills and testaments, Florentine highlanders do not easily fit a model of a backward, non-Christian people, distinct from those further down the hills, as contemporaries from the cities charged and historians of the Mediterranean and Tuscany have assumed ever since.³⁸ Yet the stereotypes of highlanders in Scotland and in Tuscany were not exactly the same. While Fordun and others feared the highlander and his bellicose nature, no such fear flows from Sermini's pen. By his account, the worst offense committed by his highland hosts was talking about trivial matters in the presence of a man as important as himself. Nor was this absence simply an oversight peculiar to Sermini; contemporary Florentines, such as the story-teller Franco Sacchetti and the humanist Poggio Bracciolini ridiculed their highlanders for their stupidity and primitive religion but, along with other Florentine writers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, gave no hint that these men and women could have been ferocious opponents to Florentine republican rule. The patrician diarist Buonaccorso Pitti,³⁹ the military commander Jacopo Salviati,⁴⁰ and the chronicler, Gregorio Dati,⁴¹ went further, praising the mountain men of the Mugello and the Casentino for their loyalty during the wars with Milan at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and their supposed appreciation of Florence's rule as effective, just, and benign.

Yet behind this praise was another reality revealed in the archival records. Far from being passive or rallying in defense of Florence's army and its ideals of Republicanism against Milanese 'tyranny' in the

³⁸Even la Roncière, presently our best authority on the life, customs, and religion of those from the Florentine *contado*, assumes (without presenting any evidence) that 'the quality of religious life was certainly inferior in the mountain zones of the Apennines and the Chianti' (la Roncière, 'Dans la campagne florentine', 309–10) and that it was more 'ritualistic and magical' (*ibid.*, 312).

³⁹*Ricordi*, in *Mercanti Scrittori. Ricordi nella Firenze tra medioevo e rinascimento*, ed. Vittore Branca (Milan 1986), 341–503.

⁴⁰*Cronica, o memorie di Jacopo Salviati dall'anno 1398 al 1411*, in *Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani*, ed. Fr. Ildefonso di San Luigi (Florence 1784), vol. xviii, 175–381.

⁴¹*L'Istoria di Firenze di Gregorio Dati dal 1380 al 1405*, ed. Luigi Pratesi (Norcia 1902).

opening years of the fifteenth century, mountain peasants across northern and eastern crests of the Florentine territory rose up against their Florentine rulers. The judicial records and decrees (*provvisioni*) passed by Florence's highest legislative bodies show that thousands of peasants not only supported the Milanese troops but also assumed leadership roles and plotted strategy for the occupation of Florentine strongholds in the mountains. In addition, they built new fortifications on mountaintops, organized raiding parties across the highlands of the Alpi Fiorentine, Podere Fiorentino, and Mugello, and on several occasions besieged Florentine towns such as Palazzuolo and Florence's principal fortified town in the north, Firenzuola.⁴² These records, moreover, show a seemingly remarkable fact in pre-industrial social history: instead of being slaughtered, the highland peasants were victorious.⁴³ Between 1402 and 1404, following their armed insurrections across the Florentine Alps, Mugello, Casentino, and Valdambra, the ringleaders negotiated with the Florentine town councillors, who dropped the highlanders' death sentences adjudicated by the law courts in the previous years and in their place offered lifetime tax cuts, rights to carry arms, and sinecures in the Florentine government along with military power and rights to decide who could emigrate into their communities. In addition, the highlanders negotiated favourable terms for their villages, gaining exemptions from all taxes of up to fifteen years. More fundamentally, as a consequence of these successes, Florence's need to placate its subjects along the sensitive mountain frontiers, and its need to stop the flow of its mountain peasants migrating across the borders, resulted in the Florentine urban elites changing their tax system from a mosaic of unequal rates that by 1400 were six times higher in the mountains than

⁴²See Cohn, *Creating the Florentine State*, chs. 4–6.

⁴³Since completing this essay, I have investigated social protest across Europe more broadly during the later middle ages and have found that peasant and urban revolts of the lower classes succeeded far more often than would be suspected from the sociological claims about 'pre-industrial' revolt; see my *Lust for Liberty: the Politics of Social Revolt in Medieval Europe, 1200–1425* (Cambridge, MA. 2006).

in the plains, to a new 'universal' tax which charged all subjects within the Florentine *contado* according to the same principles and rates.⁴⁴

Why then did the story-tellers and chroniclers refrain from branding their mountain peasants as bellicose and beastly aggressive? Here we can only speak for Florentine Tuscany. First, historians in other areas of Italy have yet to uncover widespread peasant insurrection; in recent years they have even questioned whether the peasant movements in fourteenth-century Angevin Sicily and Naples can rightly be called 'real and true peasant rebellion'.⁴⁵ To what extent similar outbreaks of peasant insurrection characterized late medieval Italy will have to await further archival study into the judicial and legislative records of other city-states. Second, the mouthpieces of Florentine ideology, from urban poets and story-tellers to humanist scholars, may have been caught in a particularly embarrassing bind, especially at the end of the fifteenth century, when these poets and humanists proclaimed that Florence was the last hope of republican liberty in city-state Italy.⁴⁶

Such self-imposed silence can be sensed in the writings of the poet and story-teller Franco Sacchetti. In addition to his poems which heaped humorous abuse on the habits of peasants from mountains and plains, Sacchetti was a bureaucrat and judge, who spent much of his career on the outposts of the Florentine territory as a *podestà*, *vicarius*, and captain for the Florentine state, passing sentences on mundane criminal acts and advising Florence on policy regarding its territory. The incident that certainly would have proved the most troubling for him during his long career must have occurred when he was captain of the newly annexed mountainous territory of the Romagna, stationed at the market village or town of Rocca di San Casciano on the furthestmost north-east mountain frontiers of the Florentine territory.

⁴⁴Cohn, *Creating the Florentine State*, chs. 7–9.

⁴⁵See the essays in *Protesta e rivolta contadina nell'Italia medievale*, ed. G. Cherubini, in *Annali dell'Istituto 'Alcide Cervi'*, no. 16 (1994).

⁴⁶On this struggle and its ideology, see Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Princeton 1955; revised edn. in one vol., 1966); and Antonio Lanza, *Firenze contro Milano: Gli intellettuali fiorentini nelle guerre con i Visconti (1390–1440)* (Rome 1991).

In 1398 the Romagnol villagers of the Rocca di San Casciano rebelled, claiming that Florence had acted tyrannically by illegally reclaiming from them their rights to sell their bread gabelles granted to them with their submission to the Florentine Republic in 1382. The Florentine judge challenged these claims and further condemned two of the ringleaders to death, branding them as 'tyrants'. This peculiar charge for a criminal proceeding arose not from the ringleaders' acts of conspiracy and plans to wrest control of their village from Florentine dominion with the aid of their former feudal lords, but from their secular blasphemy in daring to call republican Florence itself a tyranny. Further, by turning to their former feudal lords to 'liberate' them from the 'tyranny' of Florentine republicanism, these men and their village followers had insulted Florentine ideology and its crusading claims, since the early fourteenth century, that the republic had freed these and other mountainous districts from the yoke and oppression of feudal tyranny.⁴⁷ The judgment and sentence of Florence's captain did not, however, prevail. Instead, the ringleaders escaped, and two months later, with war beginning to mount along the mountainous northern and eastern borders, the village petitioned Florence's highest councils. Not only was Sacchetti's sentence overruled; the village won a five-year exemption from all taxes.⁴⁸

The judge, Franco Sacchetti,⁴⁹ Florence's most important writer of stories since Giovanni Boccaccio, left no literary traces of this case. Instead, in the year of the revolt he wrote a long poem on his experiences as Capitano of the province, decrying the torments of war and praising peace, but without any mention of the civil strife in which he adjudicated or the social discontent then brewing within the

⁴⁷I have elaborated on this case with two different interpretations in Cohn, *Women in the Streets: Essays on Sex and Power in Renaissance Italy* (Baltimore 1996), 122–3, and in Cohn, *Creating the Florentine State*, 152–3.

⁴⁸Archivio di Stato, Firenze, Provvisioni registri, reg. 88, 50v–51v (1399.iv.29).

⁴⁹On Sacchetti's political career, see *La Letteratura italiana: Gli Autori, Dizionario bibliografico e Indici*, ed. Giorgio Inglese, 2 vols. (Turin 1990–1) ii, 1558–9; John Lerner, *The Lords of Romagna: Romagnol Society and the Origins of the Signorie* (New York 1963), 162–4; and *Storia della letteratura italiana*, ed. Enrico Malato, 9 vols. to date (Rome 1995–) ii, *Il Trecento*, 894–901.

Romagna Fiorentina and the mountains of Florence's northeastern borders.⁵⁰ While Sacchetti's *Il Trecentonovelle* revelled in the satire of peasants, mocking them for their animal manners and poverty, rebellion by Florence's supposedly faithful subjects was not a subject he cared to breach.

Florence's principal chronicler of the war between Florence and Milan at the turn of the fifteenth century was the merchant historian Gregorio Dati. His version of events was the first to pitch Florence as the last bastion of republican liberty against the Milanese tyranny of Giangaleazzo Visconti.⁵¹ In making this propagandistic argument, Dati went beyond silence to resolve the potential contradiction and embarrassment of Florence's own subjects revolting against its taxes and rule, simply rewriting the history of Florence's highlands Mel Gibson-style. Chapter 54 is entitled: 'How the troops of the Duke came into the *contado* of Florence, but were not able to achieve anything by it'. Instead of admitting escalating taxes, depopulation, peasant misery and ultimately their assistance to the Milanese troops and rebellion, he describes 'the marvelous fortifications' that the Florentines maintained along their mountainous borders and the fierceness of its numerous peasant defenders; 'each peasant', according to Dati, 'was the equal of two foreign invaders'.⁵²

From Scipione Ammirato, the elder at the end of the sixteenth century⁵³ to Hans Baron and Antonio Lanzi in the second half of the twentieth century, Dati's version of events has prevailed over the counter-story that can be read from the archival records. As a consequence, historians have perpetuated a myth of Florence as the champion of republican liberty whose message rang from the battlefields against Milanese tyranny. Through the writings of Leonardo Bruni and Niccolò Machiavelli, the lessons and inspiration drawn from

⁵⁰'Canzone distesa di Franco Sachetti, fatta a Portico di Romagna, dove era capitano per lo Comune di Firenze, anno MCCCCLXXXVIII', in Lanza, *Firenze contro Milano*, 175–7; and Sacchetti, *I libro delle Rime*, ed. Franco Agno (Florence 1990), 456–60.

⁵¹On Dati's importance for Florentine historiography, see Baron, *The Crisis*, 168–72.

⁵²Dati, *L'Istoria*, 49–50.

⁵³*Istorie fiorentine con l'aggiunte di Scipione il Giovane* (Florence 1848).

this conflict ultimately became the seedbed of modern British republicanism in the seventeenth century.⁵⁴ But beneath this titanic struggle in the history of ideas another struggle for liberty actually raged in the mountains of northern Tuscany at the beginning of the fifteenth century, one which saw peasants as the victors over unequal and oppressive taxation at the hands of their urban republican lords. Evidently, it was a story about which the Florentine *literati* did not wish to joke.

⁵⁴See Baron, *The Crisis*, esp. 443–62 (Epilogue); and J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton 1975).

The Highland Landscape: Visual Depictions, 1760-1883¹

ANNE MACLEOD

Discussing the evolution of Highland tourism from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, Smout has argued that 'the Highlands began as a canvas on which the outsider could perceive little clearly, and the little that was clear was not desirable'.² This was the position in the opening decades of the eighteenth century, when men like Daniel Defoe, Edward Burt, and Sir John Clerk of Penicuik penned horrified accounts of the bleakness and sterility of the scenery. Over the course of next two hundred years, perceptions of the Highlands changed irrevocably, being visited, described, imagined and illustrated by a new generation of writers and, significantly, an increasing number of artists. The period from 1760 to 1883 was a key phase in this process, framed on the one hand by the publication of James MacPherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, and on the other by the appointment of a government commission of enquiry into conditions in the Highlands and Islands: the Napier Commission.

In spite of the value of key texts like MacPherson's poetry and the Napier Report—and, indeed, the series of travelogues on which Smout's article draws—an analysis of visual material is one of the most direct ways of accessing cultural perceptions. This is because perception is in itself a visual process, the mind's eye drawing its awareness and conception of the world around it through the organ of sight. Moreover, although the subjectivity of artistic evidence makes it a weak source of factual information about the

¹This paper was based on preliminary research for an undergraduate dissertation dealing with visual depictions of the Highlands from 1760–1883. For a more recent and detailed exploration of this topic, see Anne MacLeod, 'The idea of antiquity in visual images of the Highlands and Islands, ca 1700–1880', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Glasgow 2006).

²T. C. Smout, 'Tours in the Scottish Highlands from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries', *Northern Scotland* 5 (1983), 99–122, at 99.

contemporary Highlands, the same quality enhances its value as an index of ideas. Even a cursory examination of contemporary paintings, drawings and prints of Highland subjects and scenes reveals an angle on perceptions of the region which is too significant to be ignored. The range of source material which might be explored is vast, and the ensuing discussion focuses most particularly on illustrated travelogues, the visual spin-off from literary texts, and on the work of some of the better-known British artists to visit the Highlands and Islands during the course of the nineteenth century, including J. M. W. Turner, Horatio McCulloch, and Sir Edwin Landseer.

Superficially, the influence of Romantic ideology on the appreciation of wild landscape meant that disenchantment with the region was gradually erased by an entirely new set of images. The blank, brown uniformity rejected by earlier aesthetic canons became the nineteenth-century artist's paradise. Despite this, changing visions of scenery and geography mask an underlying continuity in visual representation. Taken as a whole, images of the Highlands from *ca* 1760 to 1883 are heavily, if not exclusively, weighted towards the depiction of landscape, something which facilitated the evasion of social issues. This may seem strange in the light of the British government's recognition that changes in the social and economic structure of the Highlands had created a set of problems pressing enough to require unprecedented official intervention by 1883. Yet crucially, the Highland region contained vast tracts of land seen as untouched by the inroads of a changing human world: something increasingly unique and therefore special in the eyes of industrialised Britain. The impoverished condition of ordinary Highlanders—widely reported in the national press during the famine decade from 1846–55, and, later, in relation to the land agitation of the 1880s—fitted ill with Ossianic images of an heroic civilisation. As something which might be presented as physically unchanged, landscape, on the other hand, became a symbol of permanence applied to the region as a whole.

Growing appreciation of the Highland landscape should not be divorced from changing perceptions of Scottish scenery more generally. Before the middle of the eighteenth century, the Scottish landscape scarcely appeared in art as a subject in its own right.³ Early painters in Scotland did not see their surroundings as equal to Italianate scenery, and it is the latter which inspired the bulk of the period's decorative art. The political instability and awkward geography of the Highlands meant that it was even less valued and seldom visited by outsiders, who feared its mountains of 'stupendous bulk, frightful irregularity and horrid gloom'⁴ in equal measure as they did its people. Edward Burt was typical of early commentators in his attitude to the physical awkwardness of Highland geography, complaining that 'the old ways (for roads I shall not call them) consisted chiefly of stony moors, bogs, rugged ... hills, entangling woods and giddy precipices'.⁵ This was an attitude compounded by the fact that Burt owed his knowledge of such 'ways' to his involvement in military projects to convert them into paved roads. Such efforts improved facilities for travel to some extent, although the continued difficulty of moving around on land, and the danger of voyages by sea, limited early visitors to a handful of determined antiquarians and scholars.

One of the pioneering scholars of the later eighteenth century was the Welsh naturalist Thomas Pennant, who produced some of the first major accounts of the Highlands after the '45 Jacobite rising. He was to make two tours, resulting in a pair of illustrated travelogues: *A Tour in Scotland, 1769* (1771) and *A Tour in Scotland, and Voyage to the Hebrides, 1772* (1774–6). Images for the second tour were provided by Pennant's personal draughtsman, Moses Griffith, together with a handful of plates engraved from drawings by other artists. The 1769 account was illustrated in retrospect, using

³James Holloway and Lindsay Errington, *The Discovery of Scotland: the Appreciation of Scottish Scenery through Two Centuries of Painting* (Edinburgh 1978), 1.

⁴Edward Burt, *Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to his Friend in London*, 2 vols. (London 1754) ii, 11.

⁵*Ibid.* ii, 305.

a stock of drawings garnered from contemporary artists, including Paul Sandby.⁶ Pennant's choice of illustrations for the 1769 tour sheds light on what he considered to be the most significant sights encountered on his travels. The 1771 edition contained only eighteen plates in all, of which seven were devoted to natural history and seven to objects of antiquarian or architectural interest. This left only four as landscape compositions in the real sense of the term. Although Pennant made no specific mention of the Highlands in the title of his tour, it is significant that all four landscape illustrations were of places well within the Highland boundary as this was understood during the period. This interest was qualified, however, by the locations illustrated: situated in Perthshire and Inverness-shire, the views delineated the more accessible points of Pennant's itinerary, a theme accentuated by the prominence of roads in two of them. One of Inverness depicts the approach along the river Ness, the wooded banks of which form an appropriate foreground. The composition's focal point is an arched stone bridge in the middle distance, something which held its own significance. The number, volume and unpredictability of Highland watercourses meant that bridges played a key role in attempts to improve communications, so furthering the spread of 'civilisation' in the region. A further illustration—entitled 'View near Blair'—again achieved a traveller's perspective. In this image, the road appears carved through rugged, barren terrain, with massive boulders strewn its verges. The eye is led onwards, however, by a vista of wooded, fertile valley flats towards which the road appears to wind its way. The gentler scenes beyond are elevated to the status of a target or goal, the road forming a thread of civilisation breaking down the barriers of access.

Almost a century later, the Victorian artist Horatio McCulloch chose to focus once again on the significance of roads in landscape in a study for his 1864 canvas *Glencoe*. Shattered rocks litter the foreground as in the Pennant illustration, but the path seems to wind round rather than through them, suggesting the superior power of

⁶Holloway and Errington, *The Discovery of Scotland*, 57.

natural forces. On the crest of the rise appear two solitary figures, silhouetted against the massive range of mountains beyond. In Pennant, the eye passes over the figures as a natural and unstriking feature of the composition; in McCulloch's drawing, their isolation provides a focus for the emotional impact of the surrounding scenery. There is no sense of origin or destination, only of a loneliness and isolation which suggests that human presence in such landscapes is passing rather than permanent. These images illustrate the enduring significance of access as a theme in representations of the Highland landscape. In 1771, Pennant's interest in the position of the road could be seen as linked to the extent that undeveloped networks limited a traveller's access to and thus perspective on that landscape. By 1864, however, when McCulloch first exhibited the final version of *Glencoe*, improved communications had opened up the Highlands to an increasing tide of visitors. We might therefore conjecture a degree of denial in the fact that only a close examination of the painting reveals the presence of a road: it has reverted to the status of one of Burt's 'old ways', rather than the thoroughfare which was by then a standard route for visitors of all sorts. A period which began with images of the road as central to a traveller's vision of the Highland landscape closed, therefore, by minimising his or her place within it, to the extent that 'no steamer breaks the surface of McCulloch's Loch Katrine, nor stagecoach trundles through his *Glencoe*, although Lord Cockburn wrote in 1843 that the coach horn had been heard in Glencoe all summer'.⁷

Early depictions of the Highland landscape did not conceal or subsume a human presence to the same degree as McCulloch's images. Indeed, most artists from the Pennant period seem to have perceived a landscape composition to be incomplete without some token of human civilisation. In comparison to the more densely populated Lowlands most travellers had just quitted, the Highlands possessed large tracts of proportionately empty territory. This awed the eighteenth-century mind, accustomed to a view of human

⁷*Ibid.*, 104.

civilisation as the apex of existence, and of a natural world carefully ordered to the use of that civilisation. A landscape which clearly dwarfed all evidence of human activity or even of existence, challenged such assumptions, and in so doing introduced an element of fear. Artists were consequently anxious to impose some evidence of human activity on the scenes they charted, adopting conventional formulae to achieve this end. 'Staffage' figures were frequently added to the foreground of a scene—figures whose presence was often incidental or peripheral to the actual setting. William Gilpin's two-volume work (1789) on the nature of picturesque beauty contained a view of Loch Dochart depicting two shadowy spectators on the shore, gazing at the island opposite. This was echoed in illustrations to a similar publication by Thomas Garnett (1800), whose artist, W. H. Watts, portrayed stock figures absorbing the impressions of the Falls of Foyers and the reflections of Kilchurn Castle in Loch Awe. The introduction of a gazing tourist as relief or focus in a landscape has parallels in some nineteenth-century paintings, including John Knox's *Landscape with Tourists at Loch Katrine* (ca 1820). Such work may represent an intermediate stage in Highland tourism, when people were beginning to penetrate these landscapes, but not in such numbers as to make it inconvenient or undesirable. The choice of travellers to populate such scenes, in contrast to those more obviously rooted in, and native to, the landscape, is nonetheless significant.

Attempts to maintain a human perspective—however forced—in depictions of the Highland landscape often contrasted the vastness of nature with the insignificance of man. This could prompt mixed results. In William Gilpin's illustration of the pass of Killiecrankie (1789), for example, the figures are an indistinct blur, serving only to amplify the magnitude of the surrounding landscape and the height of the road above the pass. Gilpin's Killiecrankie remains a dark, sombre, prison-like place, its effect on life suggested by the wind-blasted, decaying trees which occupy the foreground. J. M. W. Turner's watercolour of Loch Coruisk in Skye (1831), on the other hand, incorporated some tiny figures which are almost lost to the

turbulence of the surrounding scenery. Situated in a foreground to which there is no easily accessed 'tourist route', they invite the viewer to share their perspective and thus the emotions conveyed in the drawing. This emotion is no longer fear, as in the Gilpin illustration; it is exhilaration.

Discussing his approach to landscape drawing, Gilpin confessed that he was often prone to enlarging 'the scale of nature a little beyond nature to make nature look like herself'.⁸ Despite the lapse of almost half a century, and allowing for vast differences in style and skill, Turner was essentially engaged in the same ploy in his attempt to capture Loch Coruisk. It is evident that visitors kept coming to the Highlands with preformed ideas of what nature 'ought' to look like, then trying to remould what they encountered within the confines of this definition. During the eighteenth century, manuals on aesthetics attempted to define the quintessence of natural beauty—that elusive quality which was capable of being made into a picture. Gilpin's own work on the Scottish Highlands fell into this category, and contained some useful observations on different grades of 'picturesque' landscape, best summarised in his own words:⁹

Simplicity and variety are the acknowledged foundations of all picturesque effect. Either of them will produce it: but it generally takes its tone from one. When the landscape approaches nearer simplicity it approaches near the sublime; and when variety prevails, it tends more to the beautiful. A vast range of mountains, the lines of which are simple; and the surface broad, grand, and extensive, is rather sublime than beautiful. Add trees upon the foreground, tufted woods creeping up the sides of the hills, a castle upon some knoll, and skiffs upon the lake (if there be one) and tho the landscape will still be sublime, yet with these additions (if they are happily introduced) the beautiful will predominate.

⁸William Gilpin, *Observations Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty Made in the Year 1776, on Several Parts of Great Britain, Particularly in the Highlands of Scotland*, 2 vols. (London 1789) i, 148.

⁹*Ibid.* ii, 121.

Charles Cordiner's view of Loch Lomond, engraved for the first volume of *Remarkable Ruins, and Romantic Prospects of North Britain* (1788), was a classic example of picturesque landscape, incorporating each element of Gilpin's formula. The impact of the massive mountains in the distance is diminished by trees softening their lower slopes, a range of wooded islands in the middle distance, and a further screen of trees framing the foreground. On one of these islands is the remains of a castle; two small sailing boats are placed in the middle of the loch, with another small boat pulling to the shore; in the immediate foreground stand a group of cattle, one of which is being milked. The whole represents a union of natural variety and human activity.

Visually, Gilpin's conception of the sublime is best illustrated by returning to his image of the Pass of Killiecrankie. His description of some moorland in the region of Killin sheds further light on this category of beauty. 'Wide, waste and rude,' he styled the scenery; 'totally naked; and yet in its simplicity often sublime'. The ideas it provoked, he asserted, 'were grand, rather than pleasing,' with the result that 'the imagination was interested, but not the eye'.¹⁰ Implied in all of this is a value judgement which conveys to the reader the superiority of aesthetic over imaginative pleasure. Just how such values were liable to change across time can be demonstrated from responses to a key element of Highland landscape—water. To early visitors, the wealth of water boasted by the Highlands could not be ignored, but was only palatable as a focus for scenes of cultivation in the midst of prospects otherwise wild. Nearly all of Gilpin's landscape compositions were built around an inland loch, a river, or an arm of the sea. Even the latter, however, were never allowed to become seascapes in the real sense of the term. Lochs Fyne and Long, for instance, both of which appeared in several illustrations, are long, narrow inlets which, as Gilpin put it, 'have all the verdure and vegetation of an inland lake'.¹¹ The

¹⁰ *Ibid.* i, 171–2.

¹¹ *Ibid.* ii, 13.

celebration of a wide open expanse of ocean and its tidal rhythms which the Kintyre painter William McTaggart achieved in canvases such as *Macrihanish Bay* (1878) and *The Wave* (1881) was utterly absent from early visions of the role of water in a Highland landscape.

Waterfalls swiftly became a popular subject in early landscape studies, the falls of Clyde being among the first beauties of Scotland to attract artists' attention. Falls on the Duke of Atholl's estate were also the earliest Scottish scenes to be included in a new decorative scheme at Blair Castle during the 1760s.¹² Subsequently, certain waterfalls became set points on the itinerary of a Highland tour, as is evident from the duplication of images in illustrations from a variety of sources. Pennant's first tour of 1769 and Garnett's of 1800 both included illustrations of the Falls of Foyers in Inverness-shire. Gilpin's depiction of the 'Rumbling-Brig' on the Falls of Bran in Perthshire was echoed in Garnett's volume, and in a contemporary drawing by Alexander Campbell. In spite of their raw energy and fury, waterfalls were more palatable to the eighteenth-century mind than the open sea. As Womack explains, 'the channelled violence of the cataract exhibits an essence of natural energy which ... is strictly contained',¹³ a combination of properties which ensured the survival of the Highland waterfall in late-nineteenth-century imagery. Peter Graham's *Spate in the Highlands* (1866) was a typical specimen. Arthur a'Beckett and Linley Sambourne, who produced a lavishly-illustrated account of their holiday in the Highlands in 1876, penned the following response to a sudden spate in the Falls of Foyers:¹⁴

The rain had converted a little sluggish streamlet into a roaring torrent ... Water like boiling lava covered many a huge rock that the day before had been pale and dry ... The fall which had been a little

¹²David and Francina Irwin, *Scottish Painters at Home and Abroad, 1700-1900* (London 1975), 129-30.

¹³Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands* (Basingstoke 1989), 82.

¹⁴Arthur a' Beckett and Linley Sambourne, *Our Holiday in the Scottish Highlands* (London 1876), 68.

cloud of spray was now a volume of marble-coloured water rushing with a mighty roar under the sorely tried bridge. What had been pretty yesterday was grand today.

The title of the sketch accompanying this description makes no mention of the waterfall's identity or location, holding the vaguer designation 'Cataract after rain'. This indicates that the subject's illustrative value lay in its momentary transformation under the effect of heavy rain, not simply in the reputation of its name. The more volatile this climate proved itself to be, the more the visitor became conscious of his inability to control not only the physical form of the Highland landscape, but also its appearance at any given moment in time. Grandeur being, as we have seen, the essence of the sublime, it follows that the wilder and more uncontrollable effects of weather on landscape were seen as most conducive to sublime emotion. In 1776, Gilpin maintained that beauty depends on fair weather for its effect, commenting that 'if we had seen [Loch Leven] under a gloomy sky, it might perhaps have lost some of its beauties'.¹⁵ Half a century on, gloom had become the essence of effect in landscape painting. Sir Edwin Landseer, for instance, recorded nature in its most fleeting and dramatic circumstances in *A Lake Scene: Effect of a Storm* (ca 1833). It is significant that Landseer did not specify the name of the loch in his title, suggesting that his interests lay more in the mood or atmosphere created by Highland weather than the associations of a particular place. The location has since been identified as Loch Avon and the Cairngorm mountains. The titles of some further sketches in a' Beckett and Sambourne's volume echoed Landseer's stance in their tendency to focus on the effect of light or weather on a scene, rather than on the scene itself: 'Loch in the Isle of Skye, Sunset', 'Gairloch, Sunset', 'Sunset, near Portree' and 'Moonlight, Isle of Skye' are some examples.

In spite of Gilpin's preference for the bright, clear skies which allowed him to construe Highland scenery in the style of the French and Italian painters he imitated, the aesthetics of gloom were not a

¹⁵Gilpin, *Observations* i, 91–2.

purely nineteenth-century invention. The eighteenth-century picture was complicated by MacPherson's *Ossian*. MacPherson's sense of landscape was characterised by a vagueness which permitted the effect of weather on a scene to take precedence over the need to specify precise locations. Scenery in MacPherson was an ethereal entity: more abstract than real; atmospheric rather than physical. Single trees, roaring torrents, lochs, mountains and heaths were simply a backcloth into which the melancholy tales of his heroes and heroines melted, as in the following passage from *Fingal*.¹⁶

The winds came down on the woods. The torrents rushed from the rocks. Rain gathered round the head of Cromla. And the red stars trembled between the flying clouds. Sad, by the side of a stream whose sound was echoed by a tree, sad by the side of a stream the chief of Erin sat. Connal son of Colgar was there, and Carril of other times.

The short, terse sentences employed in such a passage give the description an accumulative turmoil which seems to rush forward in short jerks like the gusts of wind it describes. Human sorrow merges into the storm in the same way as the sound of the wind in the trees is indistinguishable from the roaring of the torrent. Unlike Sir Walter Scott, MacPherson made no attempt to tie his heroes' exploits to any specific location, with the result that landscape in illustrations to the poems was necessarily stylised and impressionistic. A gnarled tree here, a shattered boulder there, and sketched-in mountains in the distance formed the usual conventions. This can be seen in several illustrations from a 1795 edition of the complete poems, such as Fingal advising the young Oscar in *Fingal*, Fingal defying the spirit of Loda in *Carric-Thura*, and the giving of Trenmor's spear to Ossian in *Temora*. In the latter, the attached description enacts this generalisation of landscape. 'By Atha of the streams,' Fingal declares, 'there rises a mossy rock. On its head is the wandering of boughs, within the course of winds. Dark, in its face, is a cave with its own

¹⁶James MacPherson, *The Works of Ossian the Son of Fingal*, 2 vols. (London 1765) i, 43.

loud rill'.¹⁷ On the surface, this description seems intended to qualify the character of a specific place, called Atha, but the multiple plurals—'streams', 'the wandering of boughs', 'the course of winds'—and the use of the indefinite article have a generalising effect. The boundaries of Ossian's country were not intended to be specific, so much so that the protagonists themselves—especially ghosts of the deceased—merge with the landscape. In the last-mentioned illustration, Trenmor is represented riding in clouds driven by the wind, an image inspired by Fingal's address to his spirit: 'Thee have I seen at times, bright from between the clouds; so appear to my son, when he is to lift the spear: then shall he remember thy mighty deeds, though thou art now but a blast'.¹⁸ Other visual interpretations of MacPherson's landscape tended to echo this union between elements, so that it is often difficult to separate figures from clouds and the effect of the wind in a woman's hair from the same effect in a tree. This can be seen in Alexander Runciman's etching, *Fingal and Conban Cargla* (ca 1772) in which the billowing cloaks of the figures merge with the flying clouds in the sky beyond.

Taken together, these images conflict on the question of whether nature is a static entity improvable by art, or a kaleidoscope of changing moods almost impossible to capture. In essence, this relates to the superiority or otherwise of nature in relation to man, a theme at the heart of another contemporary problem: the extent to which nature might be debased by usefulness. Despite their human-centred outlook on the world, eighteenth-century improvers' attempts to landscape their environment without 'it having ceased to be natural'¹⁹ foreshadowed to some extent the later, more wholehearted, celebration of 'pure' nature in art. Frequently, such planners turned to plantation schemes as the ideal answer to the problem, as trees could be shaped, trimmed, planted in regular rows

¹⁷*Ibid.* ii, 197.

¹⁸*Ibid.* ii, 199–200.

¹⁹Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, 68.

and made to fill up barren spaces, while remaining authentic products of the soil. The standard route for the picturesque tour took in the lands of the dukes of Argyll and Atholl, where such schemes were then most evident. The eighteenth-century eye was charmed with the result, as is clear from an illustration in Garnett's *Observations* (1800) which depicted the seat of Inveraray from an angle emphasising a regular avenue of trees in the middle distance, connecting the planned village with the castle in an almost straight line.

Modern Inveraray was a further product of the Duke of Argyll's private improvement schemes, bearing little resemblance to the original settlement. As the first governor of the British Fisheries Society, Argyll was also involved in the establishment of several planned villages in the north and west, such as Tobermory in Mull, Pultneytown in Wick and Ullapool in Wester Ross. These were designed to attract a settled population to the work of fishing the migrant herring shoals, on the premise that Scottish Gaels were 'not less capable, nor less inclined than their fellow citizens to become useful members of the community'.²⁰ In 1772, Thomas Pennant gave voice to similar sentiments, recording evident pleasure at seeing some 'darksome and horrible' scenery in the region of Loch Hourn relieved by the sudden appearance of a fleet of fishing boats:²¹

... so unexpected a prospect of the busy haunt of men and ships in this wild and romantic tract, afforded this agreeable reflection: that there is no part of our dominions so remote, so inhospitable, and so unprofitable, as to deny employ and livelihood to thousands.

Despite Pennant's description of a 'busy haunt of men and ships', it is interesting to note that the landscape rather than the evidence of industry dominated his artist's illustration. Although Pennant observed the presence of more than one hundred boats, Griffith

²⁰'Incorporation of the British Fisheries Society', 1786, cited in Jean Dunlop, *The British Fisheries Society, 1786-1893* (Edinburgh 1978), 209.

²¹Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides, 1772*, 2 vols. (Chester 1774-6) i, 344.

chose to conceal most of these behind a rocky headland at the further end of the loch. It is as if the elements of industry needed only to be faintly sketched in order to inform the viewer of their presence: one need not be brought too close to the details of everyday employment. A drawing by Turner engraved for Mawman's *Excursion to the Highlands of Scotland* (1805) followed this trend in its depiction of native Highlanders engaged in fishing work at Inveraray. 'Crowded with herring busses, reeling at every ebb and flow,' Mawman enthused, 'the foreground diffused a lively interest over the romantic scenery in the distance'.²² In Turner's drawing, the human element has a compositional rather than intrinsic value: near enough to make out the protagonists' colourful tartan costume, but not so close as to make them the substance and focus of the image.

Moving into the nineteenth century, some later work demonstrates that where images of the Highlander did creep into the foreground of landscape views, activity connected with fishing proved a consistently orthodox subject. The recurrence of images showcasing busy ports like Inveraray suggests that artists generally perceived no conflict between industry and art in this particular instance. Especially of this persuasion was William Daniell, whose well-known aquatints of the British coastline included such scenes as 'Helmsdale, Sutherlandshire', 'Rodel, Harris' and 'Pier at Tanera, Loch Broom'. In these and similar examples, Daniell constructed a comprehensive picture of the fisheries developing in various parts of the Highlands and Islands. In particular, the print of Tanera emphasised the potential usefulness of Highland geography in establishing new centres for the industry. On the island's northern shore, a curved bay provides the site for the surviving harbour, sheltered by the Coigach hills. Daniell's stance, looking towards Stac Pollaidh and Cùl Mòr, underlined the station's favourable geography, recalling Pennant's observation that even the wildest

²²J. Mawman, *An Excursion to the Highlands of Scotland and the English Lakes, with Recollections, Descriptions and References to Historical Facts* (London 1789), 144.

aspects of the region could be harnessed to the use of man. The long sea lochs and many islands of the west coast, while restricting access and making travel and communications difficult on land, nonetheless provided natural harbours for the fishing industry.

It proved much easier to celebrate the success of these improvements in terms of their impact on the visible landscape than on the people they were equally designed to civilise and tame. The main thrust of private improvers' activities was not, of course, primarily humanitarian. In many cases, Helmsdale being a prime example, fishing communities were populated by those cleared from fertile inland glens subsequently given over to sheep. In all the evidence considered, nothing addressed this corollary to the improvement schemes discussed above in any direct way. Some later paintings skirted around it by focusing on emigration, but the theme of sheep replacing men did not inspire the pencils of contemporary artists. Deer, on the other hand, featured relatively early in the visual discovery of the region. Sir Edwin Landseer, who first visited the Highlands in 1824,²³ remains the best known proponent of the sporting industry on canvas. From 1824, he was to return every autumn to shoot and sketch, resulting in a spate of major works centring around images of the hunter and the hunted.²⁴ His paintings alternately delighted and repulsed Victorian audiences and survive as an uncomfortable legacy of their times. The power of Landseer's work is best conveyed by the enduring fame of his best-known canvas, *The Monarch of the Glen* (1851). Poised on an eminence above misty corries, the twelve-pointed stag of *The Monarch* is both heroic and majestic: in complete command of a vast landscape. A further painting, *Scene in Braemar*, depicts another stag in a similar position, this time surrounded by his retinue of hinds and bellowing a challenge. Again, the emphasis is on possession, the only backdrop to the viewpoint being the clouds, placing the animal on a pedestal

²³Richard Ormond, *Sir Edwin Landseer* (London 1981), 60–1.

²⁴The most recent survey of Landseer's Highland work is Richard Ormond, *Monarch of the Glen: Landseer in the Highlands* (Edinburgh 2005).

man cannot attempt to scale. The reception of some of the artist's more graphic hunting works was mixed, however. In 1851, *The Art Journal* printed an engraving of *Deer and Deerhounds in a Mountain Torrent* (ca 1833), describing it as 'a fine picture, but a subject ill calculated to elicit pleasure'.²⁵

Not all of Landseer's hunting scenes were so devoid of people as these examples. Many of his commissioned works incorporated portraits of the aristocratic patrons whose estates he stalked each year. The most significant of these patrons was Queen Victoria. *Royal Sports on Hill and Loch*, begun in 1850, was the largest and most important of Landseer's 'royal' paintings, although it survives only as an engraving. Queen Victoria's first tour of the Highlands in 1842 began an enduring infatuation with the region which was to have repercussions in the nation at large.²⁶ Later in the century, David MacBrayne and Co. played on the popular appeal of royal example in its timetable of summer tours with an allusion to the 'royal route' from Glasgow to the Highlands:²⁷ evidence of a more than tenuous connection between Balmoral and mass tourism. It would be misleading to suggest, however, that royal example was the only, or even the principal cause of the region's growing reputation as a tourist destination. Travellers who made the arduous journey to scenes such as Loch Coruisk were equally likely to do so in quest of literary associations. The significance of Loch Coruisk arose from its being the setting for part of Scott's epic poem *The Lord of the Isles*, first published in 1815. The importance of this connection to the nineteenth-century tourist was still being exploited by MacBrayne's brochures as late as 1885, with appropriate quotations from the poem. By playing on this phenomenon, commercial companies like MacBrayne and Co. demonstrated the potential of a new and greater

²⁵ *The Art Journal* 3 (1851) 4. This painting has also been known as *Death of the Stag* or *The Hunted Stag*.

²⁶ R. W. Butler, 'The evolution of tourism in the Scottish Highlands', *Annals of Tourism Research* 12 (1985) 371–91.

²⁷ See, for example, David MacBrayne, *Summer Tours in Scotland - Glasgow to the Highlands - 'Royal Route' - Official Guide* (Glasgow 1885).

source of profit from the Highland landscape if appropriately marketed. The breadth of this market was at least partly dependent on the extent to which Scott's reputation rested on his Highland works. In addition to his poetry, this was secured by a stream of immensely successful historical novels of which *Waverley* (1814) was the first.

The type of imagery inspired by *Waverley* can be seen in James Melville's rendition of 'The Pass of Bally Brough,' featuring the episode where Edward Waverley makes his excursion into the Highlands conducted by MacIvor's clansman Evan Dubh. The illustration matched Scott's description closely, with an overall effect which leans towards the mystical: a rocky pass so narrow that the river seems to force its way in a series of falls over rocks and boulders; the furthest mountains and the figures shrouded in mist, feebly lit by the setting sun. Even the Highlanders seem overawed by the rocks through which they clamber, gazing upwards at a soaring eagle: 'the monarch of the feathered tribes'.²⁸ By suggesting that such landscapes were ruled by animals rather than men, these images made any human presence in the scenes portrayed a distinct anomaly. A similar effect was achieved in Horatio McCulloch's *Loch Katrine* (1866), the setting for another of Scott's works, *The Lady of the Lake* (1810). In McCulloch's rendering, the only thing to break the painting's static clarity is a small group of hinds clustered along the shore. Despite defying man's right to intrude upon the stillness of such scenes, these images enhanced rather than impeded the commercial potential of Highland tourism. They created a surrogate tranquillity which inserted a distance between the viewer and the rush of ordinary life, even when jostling for position in a crowded exhibition room. McCulloch's depiction of Loch Katrine achieved its intensity from the luminous quality inherent in its colouring, giving the surface of the loch and its reflections a jewel-like character. The same effect was used by Landseer in *The Sanctuary*, painted at Loch Maree in 1842, which depicted an exhausted stag emerging from a

²⁸Walter Scott, *Waverley, or 'Tis Sixty Years Since*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh 1814) i, 241.

loch, having successfully eluded its pursuer. Images like these became central to a vision of the Highlands in which remoteness could be celebrated as a sanctuary for human as well as animal society.

In its primary meaning, a sanctuary denotes 'a holy place', lending a new dimension to the potential value of the Highland landscape. This idea of the region first surfaced in the descriptions attached to the island of Staffa and its legendary cave, one of the key stopping points on the itinerary of a Highland tour. 'Discovered' by naturalist Sir Joseph Banks in 1772, the island was given a prominent place in Pennant's second tour. Illustrations by Banks' artists were used by Pennant to accompany this volume. A frequently reproduced example is a print of Fingal's Cave in which the human figures—some on the rocks and some in a boat entering the cave—are swamped by the sheer size of the cavern. The artist aimed to emphasise the straightness and regularity of the basalt columns inside the cave, likened to the pillars lining the nave of a Gothic cathedral. Compared to this impression of vastness and uniformity, Banks had exclaimed, 'what are the cathedrals or the palaces built by man! mere models or playthings, imitations as diminutive as his works will always be when compared to those of nature'.²⁹ The cathedral, as the apex of medieval man's attempts to harmonise the spirit and the structure within which he worshipped, combined notions of physical grandeur and artistry with an awe-inducing stillness and solemnity. The German composer Felix Mendelssohn returned to this image in an evocative description of Fingal's cave: 'that vast cathedral of the sea, with its dark lapping waters within, and the brightness of the gleaming waters without'.³⁰ He was to freeze his tribute to this natural cathedral in 'the great surges of wave-like music'³¹ we now know as the *Hebrides Overture*. The resemblance of Fingal's cave to a cathedral rather than any other

²⁹Quoted in Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides*, 262.

³⁰Elizabeth Bray, *Discovery of the Hebrides: Voyages to the Western Isles, 1745–1883* (Edinburgh 1996), 96.

³¹*Ibid.*

human building elevated it to a level of sanctity and thus of mystery. Its enigmatic reputation was compounded by the fact that heavy seas often made it difficult or dangerous to get to, an image exploited by Turner in *Staffa, Fingal's Cave* (1832). In this canvas, Turner created a welter of water and sky in which the land is scarcely visible, enveloped in a screen of mist and spray. A closer view, from inside the cave itself, was engraved as a vignette for Cadell's edition of Scott's poetical works (1833–4). Again, the sea pours in, pounding the rocks in a flurry of spray, a spectacle the viewer is privileged to see from within the *sanctum sanctorum*.

As applied to landscape, the image of the cathedral had a further significance. Architectural parallels were common currency in responses to the Highland landscape throughout our period, particularly in the sense of antiquarian remains or ruins. James Wilson, author of *A Voyage Round the Coasts of Scotland and its Isles* (1842), drew on this metaphor in his response to Fingal's Cave—'worn by the murmuring waves of many thousand years into the semblance of some stupendous Gothic arch'—and again to Loch Coruisk:³²

The dead, dull lake lay beneath; the ruins, as it were, of a former world were scattered on all sides; and above, as far as the eye can pierce through the murky clouds, rose the vast rocky pinnacles, their extremest heights obscured except at intervals, when we could behold the grim and awful giants keeping their eternal watches.

Charles Weld, writing about Loch Coruisk in 1860, described how, after a circuit of the loch, he 'sat down where [he] could take in the vast sweep of dark precipices overhanging the lake. The clouds, here never or rarely at rest, were drifting grandly amidst the serrated peaks, which towered aloft like huge distorted cathedral spires'.³³ Such language sheds light on the growing preoccupation with

³²James Wilson, *A Voyage Round the Coasts of Scotland and its Isles*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh 1842) i, 122, 220.

³³Charles Richard Weld, *Two Months in the Highlands, Orcadia and Skye* (London 1860), 369.

fantastic rock formations in depictions of the region during the period. Daniell's *Voyage Round Great Britain* (1814–25), in particular, contains numerous examples, including several prints of Staffa, one of the Greenstone Rock at the mouth of Loch Broom, and fine studies of Smoo Cave on the north coast and of the cliffs at Gribune Head in Mull. The Highlands emerged from such images as a geological field fossilised by its very wildness, shaped by forces far beyond the memory of man.

To a generation fascinated by everything of an historical nature, a landscape physically falling into ruins could lead people into speculation about aeons of time far older than the foundations of a lochside castle. The obsession of the age with all things ancient is evident at a glance from the titles of contemporary publications such as Cordiner's *Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland* (1780) and *Remarkable Ruins and Romantic Prospects of North Britain* (1788); Grose's *Antiquities of Scotland* (1797); and Scott's *Provincial Antiquities and Picturesque Scenery of Scotland* (1826). It is noteworthy that the titles to these illustrated works placed antiquities and landscape side by side as companion subjects of the same volume, suggesting a natural connection between ruins and scenery. This implied connection was cultivated in travel literature throughout the period, which seized the same ruins—particularly castles—as suitable subjects for picturesque images. Nineteenth-century painters like Horatio McCulloch created classic canvases in which landscape and fortress combined to form a balanced portrait which privileged neither element above the other.³⁴ This evidence implies a perceived sympathy between antique structures and the Highland landscape which went deeper than the fact that scores of ruins might be found as it were ready-to-paint in suitably romantic situations. The parallel between unusual rock formations, as tokens of a physically ruined landscape, and conventionally ruined structures reached beyond mere aesthetics. The form of both being

³⁴ For a range of examples, see Sheenah Smith, *Horatio McCulloch, 1805–1867* (Glasgow 1988).

shaped by time and history, they merged to forge a composite image of the Highlands whose value and legitimacy was founded on antiquity.

Besides the geological significance of such allusions, the presence of ruins in a landscape operated on another level. This was the capacity of antiquarian remains to stir up recollections of former ways and deeds, drawn from the annals of human history. For visitors to the Highlands and Islands, the connection between ruins and the as-yet-recent memory of Jacobite insurrection was persistent and widespread. In Garnett's travelogue (1800), an illustration of Invergarry Castle was accompanied by a note regarding its association with the Jacobite rising and subsequent firing in the year 1745, an event which to the author's eyes made it 'a very picturesque object'.³⁵ Given that the first artist to chart the significance of ruined castles in the Highland landscape did so in a military context, Garnett's comment makes interesting reading. This artist was Paul Sandby, a young draughtsman employed by the Board of Ordnance for its official survey of the region, which began in 1747. Despite their artistic merit, Sandby's plans of Castle Tioram in Moidart and Castle Duart in Mull were utilitarian in concept, intended to convey precise information as to the potential of both castles for military use. The forfeiture of estates and the destruction of Jacobite strongholds after Culloden had left many such ruins across the Highland landscape, and the fact that many of them remained so in spite of Sandby's plans partially explains the romanticisation of the cause they stood for. The more the mortar of Invergarry and its counterparts crumbled and fell, the more the spectre of Jacobitism as a cohesive political threat faded from the minds of the British public. This was reflected in the taste for scenes from Jacobite history in later imagery, such as John Everett Millais' emotional *Order of Release* (1853), J. B. MacDonald's *Arrest of the Rebel after the Battle*

³⁵Thomas Garnett, *Observations Made on a Tour through the Highlands and Part of the Western Isles of Scotland*, 2 vols. (London 1800) i, 317.

of *Culloden* (1864), and John Pettie's solitary rebel in *Disbanded* (1877).

The ruined fortresses which peppered illustrations of the Highland landscape throughout our period fed this appetite for historic fare, holding associations of past deeds and glories. This approach to landscape was popularised by Sir Walter Scott, who articulated the nature of his response to landscape in the 1808 autobiography with which J. G. Lockhart began his *Memoirs*.³⁶

... the historical incidents or traditional legends connected with many of them, gave to my admiration a sort of intense impression of reverence, which at times made my heart feel too big for its bosom. From this time the love of natural beauty, more especially when combined with ancient ruins, or remains of our fathers' piety or splendour, became with me an insatiable passion.

Scott's use of Highland castles as settings for some of the scenes in his novels was based on their real historical significance. His works—both novels and poetry—were all illustrated in many editions, the most significant being the publisher Cadell's 1833–4 commission to Turner for the poetry. Many Scott illustrations were published in collections like the 1834 work *Illustrations, Landscape, Historical and Antiquarian, to the Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott* and *Landscape-Historical Illustrations of Scotland and the Waverley Novels* (1836–8). Such titles echoed the sympathy between landscape and history articulated in earlier antiquarian works. Scott's contribution to the period's intense interest in Highland antiquities and their surrounding history is evident from the parallels between these illustrations and contemporary paintings. In the 1836–8 collection, an illustration of Inverlochy Castle from *A Legend of Montrose* mirrored Horatio McCulloch's choice of the same view for a painting exhibited in 1857. In the novel, the significance of Inverlochy arose from its being the setting for a battle staged in 1645 between the forces of Argyll and a Highland army led by Montrose.

³⁶J. G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, 7 vols. (Edinburgh 1842) i, 12.

In McCulloch's *Inverlochy*, this martial history remained implicit rather than explicit, depending on the knowledge of the viewer for effect. Turner, in his contributions to Scott's Lowland *Provincial Antiquities*, had deliberately juxtaposed ruined architecture with figures dressed in the costume of his own time to imply a gulf between the present and the ruin's former glory.³⁷ In the Highlands, McCulloch saw no need to emphasise the antiquity of Inverlochy with reminders of the present. It was taken as read.

This dependence on the audience to supply the associations of any given scene transformed the Highland landscape into a vast repository of memories, essential to the commemoration of what Scott termed 'our fathers' piety or splendour'. In a Highland context, this notion drew on the literary precedent established by MacPherson's Ossian. *The Poems of Ossian* are permeated by the pressure of a past which we are to believe has driven the blind bard to poetry. In titling his first collection *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, MacPherson added to their appeal in suggesting that the poems themselves were in some way tinged with ruin or decay: a hallmark of age and thus of authenticity.³⁸ Readers were invited to attribute this to the imperfect transmission of oral poetry through the medium of human memory. In descriptions such as the following from *Carthon*, memory was nonetheless revealed to be the central theme of Ossianic poetry as well as being its inspiration and its vehicle:³⁹

I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were desolate. The fire had resounded in the halls: and the voice of the people is heard no more. The stream of Clutha was removed from its place, by the fall of the walls. The thistle shook, there, its lonely head: the moss whistled to the wind. The fox looked out, from the windows, the rank grass of the wall waved round his head.

³⁷Gerald Finley, *Landscapes of Memory: Turner as Illustrator to Scott* (London 1980), 56.

³⁸Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, 103.

³⁹MacPherson, *The Works of Ossian*, i, 187.

The significance of Balclutha to the poet arises from the associations which his memory has assigned to it: devoid of 'the voice of the people', it becomes a standard elegiac symbol. Taken alongside their depiction as virtually inseparable from the Highland landscape, the transformation of such ruins into elegiac symbols extended this wistful note to perceptions of the region as a whole. This may be one reason why depictions of the Highlands across our period largely ignored the presence of contemporary Gaels. MacPherson's presentation of the region as a 'beautiful ghost'⁴⁰ to the wider world foreshadowed later perceptions of its people as a dead or dying race.⁴¹ Many nineteenth-century painters like Landseer compounded their vision of a landscape given over to wild animals with set-pieces casting traditions in a patriarchal mode. *Return from the Staghunt* (1837), with its harmonious procession of chief and clansmen, *The Highland Drover's Departure* (1835), commemorating drives of cattle to the southern markets, and *Rent Day in the Wilderness* (1868), a scene from Jacobite lore portrayed with ritual solemnity, all fall into this category. It is telling that artists who did see native Highlanders as suitable subjects for painting placed them firmly in the annals of a bygone era.

Thomas Faed, in *The Last of the Clan* (1865), achieved a similar effect in a painting often seen as the prototypical image of the Clearances. However, its stereotype of the last survivor tied it into contemporary visions of the Gael as a doomed people. Visually, it is a powerful painting, but in concept it bypassed the plight of contemporary Highlanders, among whom emigration was by no means a thing of the past. Artists continued to extract pathos from the emotional potential of emigration, J. W. Nicol's *Lochaber no more* (1883) being a further example of the genre. Taking its title from a popular lament, the painting shows an emigrant taking a last look at the receding, mist-swathed homeland as his wife lies

⁴⁰Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, 109.

⁴¹Krisztina Fenyo, *Contempt, Sympathy and Romance: Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands and the Clearances During the Famine Years, 1845–1855* (East Linton 2000), 182.

prostrate beside him. Again, Nicol centred on the surface emotion of departure rather than the root causes or the plight of those left behind. In *My Heart's in the Highlands* (1860), a work originally entitled *The Emigrant's Dream of his Highland Home*, Horatio McCulloch portrayed another version of the 'backward look'. It is an imaginary scene, fusing the elements of conventional Highland landscapes in its deer, ruined castle, wooded foreground, loch and misty mountains. Although McCulloch's work is complex, frequently containing a wealth of hidden human detail, it is difficult to reconcile the emigrant's supposed longing for a wilderness given over to ruins and deer with the lament for deserted homes, uncultivated fields, and silenced villages in contemporary Gaelic poetry:⁴²

Direadh a-mach ri Beinn Shianta,
 Gur cianail tha mo smuaintean,

 A' faicinn na beinne 'na fàsach
 'S i gun àiteach air a h-uachdar;

 Sealltain a-sìos thar a' bhealaich,
 'S ann agamsa tha 'n sealladh fuairidh.

 'S lionmhor bothan bochd gun àird air
 Air gach taobh 'nan làraich uaine,

 Agus fàrdach tha gun mhullach
 Is 'na thulaich aig an fhuaran.

*As I climb up towards Ben Shiant,
 my thoughts are filled with sadness,

 seeing the mountain as a wilderness,
 with no cultivation on its surface.*

⁴²An Lighiche Iain MacLachlainn/Dr John MacLachlan, 'Direadh a-mach ri Beinn Shianta'/'Climbing up towards Ben Shiant', in *Tuath is Tighearna: Tenants and Landlords. An Anthology of Gaelic Poetry of Social and Political Protest from the Clearances to the Land Agitation, 1800–1890*, ed. Donald E. Meek (Scottish Gaelic Texts Society: Edinburgh 1995), 57/192.

*As I look down over the pass,
 what a chilling view I have!*

*So many poor cottages in disarray,
 in green ruins on each side,
 and houses without a roof,
 in heaps by the water-spring!*

McCulloch's painting strikes a false note in suggesting that it is romantic scenery, not a working landscape or a community, that the emigrant craves. By way of contrast, it is interesting to note the comments of an earlier traveller—the geologist John MacCulloch—on the Gael's perception of his native landscape. Although an outsider's interpretation, it echoes the ethos of MacLachlan's elegy on the decaying townships of Ben Shiant:⁴³

If a Highlander would show you a fine prospect, he does not lead you to the torrent and the romantic rocky glen, to the storm-beaten precipice or the cloud-capt mountain. It is to the strath covered with hamlets and cultivation, or to the extended tract of fertile lowlands, where the luxuriance of vegetation and wood depends on the exertions of human labour.

To the Gael, as one emigrant's descendant put it, 'the sheep, the heather, the whin, the mists, and the homes of the vanished races,' would always remain a poor surrogate for the feeling that in this landscape 'everyone who ever mattered is dead and gone'.⁴⁴ To those who perpetuated the image of a land of mists and vanished races, those dead or gone had never registered with any great significance, as the visual record from 1760 to 1883 amply demonstrates. Landscape was only able to become romantic through associations which confined its people and its culture to a significance firmly rooted in the past.

⁴³John MacCulloch, *The Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland*, 4 vols. (London 1824) iii, 88.

⁴⁴Hugh MacLennan, quoted in James Hunter, *On the Other Side of Sorrow: Nature and People in the Scottish Highlands* (Edinburgh 1995), 25.

If a final, composite version of the 'Highland canvas' were to be sought, the title page of Beckett and Sambourne's travelogue reflects some aspects of it in miniature. In this, the region's iconography was twisted into pictorial lettering spelling out the title 'Our Holiday in the Scottish Highlands'. The very familiarity of Highland iconography by this stage allowed the artist to adopt the genre of caricature, suggesting that by 1876 there was something fixed about perceptions of what the Highlands stood for and how they could be visually portrayed. Salmon and deer, tartan and bagpipes, whisky, a pair of crossed swords and the strange rock formation of the Storr in Skye combine with more general Scottish threads such as the thistle, Scots songs and a terrier dog. The mix of Highland and Lowland symbols in this example hints at a conflation of regional and national identity by this point—something which space does not permit us to explore in any detail here. However, the prevalence of historic elements within this melting-pot of images illustrates the extent to which our period began and ended on a similar note. The controversy which broke over the authenticity of James MacPherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* and subsequent volumes focused critical attention on what had been—culturally as well as geographically—uncharted territory. At a time when primitive antiquity was fashionable, images of a lost world lamented by an ancient bard drew and intrigued the curious. Whatever their ultimate assessment of the authenticity of Ossian, these and subsequent visitors to the Highlands were happy to perpetuate MacPherson's images. So much so, that by 1883 artists like J. W. Nicol remained content to sever land and people with the familiar epitaph of emigration. This was despite the fact that in the same year, government commissioners were gathering the evidence required to justify proposals for 'a complex system of interference' on behalf of the ordinary Highlander. They did so well aware of those who saw no need for 'curious expedients, which may merely prolong his decay,' and who argued that 'the small tenancies of the Highlands

would not be the only interest abandoned to irresistible innovations'.⁴⁵

As concerns the place and future of the Highlander within his landscape, the visual record takes an ambivalent stance. To a large extent, artists sidestepped the issue by celebrating natural forms as a superior form of architecture, the evidence of nature's handiwork, and a link with very early times. Those such as Moses Griffith and William Daniell, who used their art to chart some of the schemes for industry developing in the western Highlands and Islands, were equally complicit in creating and perpetuating the image of antiquity. Visions of an ancient and romantic country fitted well with notions of a dead or dying race. They also paved the way for an evasion of reality whereby proponents of improvement could overlook the impact of their innovations. The Highlands were economically useful because they could be physically planted, fished or grazed by sheep and deer. They were also emotionally useful as a romantic sanctuary in which the tourist (so long as he ignored those with the same idea as himself) could retire in quest of the sublimity of solitude. Images of the Highland landscape throughout our period wrestle with the relationship between man and his surroundings—their scale, utility and ultimate significance. Fundamentally, however, we are left with a sense that where a human element is introduced to Highland landscapes it is most often as a foil for questions of philosophical import, rather than being motivated by a real engagement with the concerns of the indigenous inhabitants.

⁴⁵Parliamentary Papers 1884 XXXVI, *Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the Condition of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, 108.

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6

'Beyond the Dusky Barrier': Perceptions of the Highlands in the Waverley Novels

ALISON LUMSDEN

It may in some ways seem foolhardy to choose to write about the Waverley Novels in a study of Lowland perceptions of the Highlands, for this is an area in which Walter Scott has not been regarded positively over recent years.¹ According to some critics, it might appear that he is single-handedly responsible for every negative perception of the region now in place. This prejudice perhaps makes it all the more necessary, however, to look again at some of the reasons why Scott is frequently criticised for his treatment of the Highlands—criticisms which seem to persist in spite of several reassessments of his work—and to consider ways in which the Waverley Novels may be re-read to offer a more richly suggestive construction of his fiction.

Common criticisms of the Waverley Novels in relation to the Highlands generally fall into two broad categories. The first of these sees in Scott's work the creation of a mythic identity for the Highlands; a series of signs or emblems which fixes the region somewhat artificially in readers' minds, so that the Highlands, as Charles Withers suggests, have become 'both real—an area of upland

¹There have been significant developments in Scott criticism since this paper was originally delivered. The most significant critical work in relation to the present subject is Caroline McCracken-Flesher's *Possible Scotlands: Walter Scott and the Story of Tomorrow* (Oxford 2005), which offers a radical new interpretation of Scott's delineation of Scottish national identity. Since this paper was delivered 'The Highland Widow' has also been published as it was originally within *Chronicles of the Canongate*, Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels [EEWN] vol. xx, ed. Claire Lamont (Edinburgh 2000). Set within the context of its original publication 'The Highland Widow' can be read as one of several tales on the subject of the negotiation of cultural and national values within this volume.

geologically largely distinct from the rest of Scotland'—and 'a myth, a set of ideologically laden signs and images'.²

This myth includes all the trappings of what may be referred to as the 'tourist board' image of Scotland—romantic scenery, heather, claymores, bagpipes and tartan-clad clansmen—and it is this image of the Highlands which commentators frequently suggest is inscribed in Scott's fiction, creating what Edwin Muir described famously as a Scotland of 'half flesh and blood and half pasteboard'.³ Muir's criticisms have been pervasive, and were frequently reiterated throughout the twentieth century. Andrew Hook, for example, reinforces this view of Scott in *The History of Scottish Literature*, writing:⁴

Through Scott the aura of romance finally settled upon Scotland. Scotland's colourful and passionate history, her lochs and rivers and mountains, her loyal, valorous, and proud people, her tradition of poetry and song—all these aspects of Scotland that had already acquired considerable romantic appeal—now appeared in a new and totally irresistible form.

It is also a view of Scott's work embodied more recently in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery's *O Caledonia!* exhibition in 1999 where Scott and a romantic model of the Highlands were yet again portrayed as inescapably intertwined.⁵ Read in this way Scott's work is held responsible for creating an identity for the Highlands which, while good for the tourist industry, creates a set of negative cultural inscriptions which modern Scotland may now wish to shake off.

²Charles Withers, 'The historical creation of the Scottish Highlands', in *The Manufacture of Scottish History*, edd. Ian Donnachie and Christopher Whatley (Edinburgh 1992), 143–56, at 143.

³Edwin Muir, *Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer* (London 1936), 13.

⁴Andrew Hook, 'Scotland and Romanticism: the international scene' in *The History of Scottish Literature*, gen. ed. Cairns Craig, 4 vols. (Aberdeen 1987–8) ii, 1660–1800, ed. Andrew Hook (Aberdeen 1987), 307–21, at 319.

⁵*O Caledonia!: Sir Walter Scott and the Creation of Scotland*, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 7 May–17 October, 1999.

Hand in hand with this criticism goes a second and perhaps even more condemnatory reading of Scott's work. At the very moment when Scott is constructing this romantic image for the Highlands, we are told, he is simultaneously consigning its 'real' identity to the dustbin of history. 'Scott reduced Scottish history to a series of isolated narratives which could not be integrated into the fundamental dynamic of history'⁶ writes Cairns Craig, and while he may suggest that by taking Scotland 'out of history' this leaves its writers free to explore 'the place where history encountered those forces which could not be made to submit to historical amelioration',⁷ other writers have interpreted this aspect of Scott's work less favourably. David Richards, for example, writes:⁸

Scott's novels are about absent subjects; it is only when the Highlands are constructed as *historically* invisible that they can re-emerge as textually visible and capable of bearing the burden of a historical discourse from which they are excluded as an extinct species.

Read in this way, Scott's work is thus held to deprive the Highlands—and sometimes Scotland as a whole—of any progressive identity, for while the region is constructed romantically it is simultaneously consigned to the past, inevitably giving way to the forces of history which position it on the side of failure—most notably in the context of the Jacobite rebellions—somehow belonging to a lost or rapidly fading world. Within this model the Highlands can only be written of elegiacally, while the future belongs to Lowland commercial Scotland and ultimately to the success of the Union and the British Empire. 'In popularizing an idea

⁶Cairns Craig, *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and English Culture* (Edinburgh 1996), 39.

⁷*Ibid.*, 44.

⁸David Richards, *Masks of Difference: Cultural Representations in Literature, Anthropology and Art* (Cambridge 1994), 121.

of Scotland, it [Scott's writing] was unparalleled', suggests Murray Pittock:⁹

But it is that very idea which invented Scotland as a museum of history and culture, denuded of the political dynamic which must keep such culture alive and developing. Scott loved his country, but denied its contemporaneity.

The cultural markers of that 'museum of history and culture' which Scott is accused of having inscribed in our national identity arise, however, not only from the Waverley Novels, but also from his poetry, and, to an extent greater than usual for a writer, from the evidence of his life. Long before turning to novel writing Scott had already established himself as a poet, and many of the images associated with Scott and the Highlands may be attributed to works like *The Lady of the Lake* rather than to his fiction. Our modern perceptions of Scott's attitudes to the Highlands are also shaped by the construction of what may be seen, on the face of it, as a museum of antiquities at Abbotsford;¹⁰ or, even more pertinently, to Scott's stage management of the visit of George IV to Edinburgh, which took place from 14 August to 29 August, 1822.

It is worth pausing to remind ourselves of the circumstances surrounding this visit. When George IV came to Scotland in 1822 it was the first time that a monarch had stepped foot on Scottish soil since Charles II had taken refuge there during the Civil Wars of the mid-seventeenth century. Equally significantly, it was the first time that a member of the Hanoverian royal family had entered Scotland since the ill-renowned Butcher Cumberland. The visit was thus heavily loaded with cultural connotations. It was to Scott, who had attended the coronation the year before, and who had long been

⁹Murray Pittock, *The Invention of Scotland: The Stuart Myth and the Scottish Identity, 1638 to the Present* (London 1991), 87.

¹⁰An interesting perspective on how Scott regarded his antiquarian collections is offered in a manuscript in the possession of the Faculty of Advocates, published as *Reliquiae Totcosienses*, edd. Gerard Carruthers and Alison Lumsden (Edinburgh 2004).

admired by George, that the task of stage-managing the event fell. The result, frequently parodied in the image of the corpulent King parading the High Street of Edinburgh in pink tights and a kilt, is well known; equally the visit, with its emphasis on Highlanders, tartan and bagpipes, is frequently held to have instigated all that we dislike in images of the Highlands which persist until today, and it has, indeed, even been held responsible for their economic demise. 'Scotland could not be the same again once it was over', writes John Prebble of the visit:¹¹

A bogus tartan caricature of itself had been drawn and accepted, even by those who mocked it, and it would develop in perspective and colour ... Walter Scott's Celtification continued to seduce his countrymen, and thereby prepared them for political and industrial exploitation.

However, while there may have been aspects of the king's visit which were ill-advised or even unfortunate, it is worth looking again at the details of it before reaching such an extreme conclusion. For example, we might consider how Scott himself regarded the arrangements. In a letter to MacLeod of MacLeod, he writes:¹²

Do come and bring half-a-dozen or half-a-score of Clansmen, so as to look like an Island Chief as you are. Highlanders are what he will like best to see, and the masquerade of the Celtic Society will not do without some of the real stuff, to bear it out. Pray come and do not forget to bring the Bodyguard for the credit of Old Scotland and your own old house.

Clearly, whatever may have been the result, Scott's main motivation was that the visit should be for 'the credit of Old Scotland', and the good behaviour of the people of Edinburgh throughout the visit is a fact frequently mentioned in his letters written shortly afterwards. What is more significant is that, with this purpose in mind, Scott

¹¹John Prebble, *The King's Jaunt: George IV in Scotland, August 1822* (London 1988), 364.

¹²*The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, edd. H. J. C. Grierson *et al.*, 12 vols. (London 1932–7) vii, 213–14.

seeks to emphasise the separate cultural identity of Scotland, and to do so, looks to those greatest markers of its difference, Highlanders and the Highlands, turning not only to those whom Scott perceived as genuine Highlanders such as MacLeod, but also to the Celtic Society of Edinburgh, an institution established mainly for the patronage of Highland manners and customs.

If Scott's intention was to portray Scotland in a good light, and to do so by establishing its own cultural identity, there can be no doubt that this was achieved. The poet Crabbe, for example, arrived unexpectedly to visit Scott in the midst of the celebrations, and Lockhart, Scott's biographer, writes that Crabbe was soon aware that he had landed in what appeared both geographically and symbolically another country:¹³

It seemed as if he had never for one moment conceived that the same island, in which his peaceful parsonage stood, contained actually a race of men, and gentlemen too, owning no affinity with Englishmen, either in blood or in speech, and still proud in wearing, whenever opportunity served, a national dress of their own.

The king clearly had similar views by the end of his visit, for even Scott was somewhat taken aback when, at a dinner given by the Magistrates of Edinburgh in the Parliament House, the King toasted, "*The Chieftains and Clans of Scotland*—and prosperity to the Land of Cakes". 'So completely had this hallucination taken possession', writes Lockhart, 'that nobody seems to have been startled at the time by language which thus distinctly conveyed his Majesty's impression that the marking and crowning glory of Scotland consisted in the Highland clans and their chieftains'.¹⁴

While at first glance it may be easy to mock the events of 1822, when looked at more closely much can be said in Scott's defence. The role of the Celtic Society of Edinburgh for example is complex; while their predilection for dressing up in tartans may have been

¹³J. G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, 7 vols. (Edinburgh 1837–8) v, 197.

¹⁴*Ibid.* v, 206.

essentially antiquarian in impulse, mere 'masquerade' as Scott recognises, it nevertheless kept alive a provisional version of Highland identity which was available as a model upon which to construct a more vital paradigm of the Highlands in 1822. Moreover, its English counterpart, The Highland Society of London, founded in 1777, had largely been responsible for the repeal of the Disarming Act in 1782; again, whatever their intentions in doing so, this made it possible, only forty years later, for ranks of armed Highlanders to face a member of the Hanoverian dynasty. From this distance, it is easy to see this as an empty gesture, but Scott himself was aware of its potency, writing to Lady Abercorn of his anxieties about being in charge of these men 'armed to the teeth with sword and target pistol and dagger'.¹⁵ Seen thus, the pageant, like the Celtic society itself, may contain potentially radical undertones so that it emerges not only as an empty charade but as a statement about how the role of the Highlander, so often perceived in negative terms by his English neighbour, may be renegotiated.

Also pertinent is the timescale on which the visit was planned. George IV had visited Ireland the year before and his original intention had been to continue that visit to Scotland. This, however, was postponed until the following year and as late as 23 June 1822 Scott writes to Lord Montagu: 'after the public expectation had been excited we learn he is not coming'.¹⁶ On 29 June rumours of the visit were revived again, but by 16 July the King's plans are still described as 'very uncertain'.¹⁷ Only on 22 July can Scott state, 'The King is coming after all',¹⁸ and it is not until 31 July that we find him writing, 'the whole of this work has devolved on my shoulders'.¹⁹ In effect, then, Scott was left with about two weeks to prepare the royal pageant and in these circumstances was forced to create tradition on his feet. What is significant is that, asked to create a cultural event at

¹⁵ *Letters*, edd. Grierson *et al.* vii, 241–2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* vii, 191.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* vii, 212.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* vii, 213.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* vii, 215.

such short notice, Scott must surely have fallen back on images already well in place. Seen thus, the visit can be read not as the moment when a mythopoeic version of the Highlands came into place, but, rather, as a culmination of this process.²⁰

This is a point well worth bearing in mind in any discussion of the Waverley Novels, for often critics write as if somehow, from a blank space, Scott single-handedly creates in his fiction the romantic package which we now perceive as the nineteenth-century model of the Highlands. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth, for as Peter Womack has argued so convincingly, Scott played only a very small part in the process of romanticising the region which took place roughly between the years 1746 and 1811. During this period, Womack argues, perceptions of the Highlands had manifested themselves in a number of sometimes conflicting identities, ranging from that of a lawless area peopled by savages and in need of improvement, to one inhabited by a pastoral, simple and sometimes lamented race; from a region inhabited by thieves and robbers to one containing a race imbued with natural warlike and noble qualities. This process, Womack suggests, was largely complete by 1811, only one year after the publication of Scott's *The Lady of the Lake*, to the extent that the poem, so persistently described as if it is the origin of the day trip to Loch Katrine, in fact rather refers to already established images by taking its readers along a route laid out in standard guide books for the area.²¹

Womack's study is significant, for it reminds us that a romantic construction of the Highlands was already well established by 1811—three years before the publication of *Waverley*—and by doing so provides us with an important context in which to reassess Scott's fiction; a context where, rather than creating stock notions of the Highlands, Scott can be seen as entering into negotiation with those models, reacting to sets of images already in place.

²⁰See further T. M. Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War: the Social Transformation of the Scottish Highlands* (Manchester 1994), 84–99.

²¹Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands* (London 1989), 156–8.

This view of what Scott was trying to achieve in his fiction is in part indicated by what he writes of it in the General Preface to what is known as the Magnum Opus edition of his fiction:²²

Without being so presumptuous as to hope to emulate the rich humour, pathetic tenderness, and admirable tact, which pervade the works of my accomplished friend, I felt that something might be attempted for my own country, of the same kind with that which Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland—something which might introduce her natives to those of the sister kingdom, in a more favourable light than they had been placed hitherto, and tend to procure sympathy for their virtues and indulgence for their foibles.

Here, as in his letters at the time of George IV's visit, Scott acknowledges a purpose of showing 'Old Scotland to good credit', reacting, in other words, against a set of prejudices already in place. That these prejudices bear particularly against the Highlands is also apparent, for Scott claims that he wishes to write of his early recollections of scenery and customs in that region. The precise nature of the prejudices which Scott had in mind is, of course, difficult to ascertain and is too large a topic to cover adequately here. Some indication of the preconceptions of the Highlands against which Scott was reacting may, however, be gauged by considering the contents of his library at Abbotsford. Here we find that sources for models of the region are many and various and include, for example, Thomas Pennant's *Tours in Scotland, and Voyage to the Hebrides, 1769 and 1772*, 5th edition (1790), John Campbell's *Full and Particular Description of the Highlands of Scotland* (London 1750–2), John Knox's *Tour Through the Highlands* (London 1787) and Thomas, Earl of Selkirk's *Observations on the Present State of the Highlands of Scotland* (London 1805).²³ Some

²²General Preface to the Waverley Novels in Magnum Opus edition of the Waverley Novels, 48 vols. (Edinburgh 1829–33) i, i–xcvi (at xiii).

²³J. G. Cochrane, *A Catalogue of the Library at Abbotsford* (Edinburgh 1838), 4, 16, 17. Scott also owned a copy of David Stewart of Garth's *Sketches of the Character*,

indication of the particular prejudices which he had in mind when writing the General Preface also become apparent if we consider an article contemporary with it, Scott's 1829 review of Joseph Ritson's *Annals of the Caledonians, Picts and Scots; and of Strathclyde, Cumberland, Galloway, and Murray*.²⁴ Here, Scott describes various attitudes to the Highlands, in particular those of John Pinkerton (1758–1826), and quotes Pinkerton's claim that 'The Celts of Ireland, Wales, and the Highlands of Scotland, are savages, have been savages since the world began, while a separate people, that is, while themselves and of unmixed blood'. Pinkerton states that the Highlanders have thus always been despised by their Lowland neighbours and continues: 'the Celts of Scotland always are, and continued to be, a dishonoured, timid, filthy, ignorant, and degraded race'.²⁵ To this Scott responds:²⁶

The Highlanders of Scotland ... had long inherited a large share of the kindness and respect of their countrymen ... in a word, the whole nation was disposed—we think justly—to consider them the representatives of the ancient Scots, from whom the royal line was unquestionably descended, and who, by the admission of Mr Pinkerton himself, had given name to the whole nation.

Here, then, we can see examples of the kind of prejudices Scott has in mind when writing the General Preface and, indeed, his fiction. Scott, it seems, is reacting against such prejudice, and entering into a dialogue with those perceptions of the Highlands perpetuated by the previous generation. Notably, in doing so, as in 1822, he elides Scottish and Highland identities to suggest that in defending the

Manners, and Present State of the Highlanders of Scotland (1822) (*ibid.*, 19), which possibly influenced his later Highland fiction.

²⁴*Quarterly Review*, July 1829; reprinted in *The Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, 28 vols. (Edinburgh 1834–6) xx, 301–76. The General Preface to the *Waverley* Novels was not written with the publication of *Waverley* but was added in 1829 as a general introduction to the Magnum Opus edition of Scott's fiction.

²⁵Scott, *Prose Works* xx, 320–1.

²⁶*Ibid.* xx, 321–2.

foibles of one region he is simultaneously promoting a more positive identity for the entire Scottish nation.

To state that in the Waverley Novels Scott is seeking to establish an identity for Scotland, and that that identity is intrinsically linked to that of the Highlands, is of course to say nothing new, for it could be argued that whatever good intentions Scott may have had, the result is that he unfortunately ties that Scottish identity to a set of empty romantic images, and simultaneously, as we have seen, consigns those images to a distant and disappearing past—lamented, but inevitably subsumed by the forces of history and progress. Such readings of Scott's work are basically variations on what became the standard twentieth-century reading expounded by Georg Lukács in his study *The Historical Novel*.²⁷ Lukács, of course, sees in Scott's work an essentially pragmatic view of society; one where oppositional conflict is resolved into a synthesis in order that society may move forward. Read thus, romance is subjugated to rationality and Highlands to Lowlands, in order that Britain may move forward into post-Union prosperity. Seen in this light, *Waverley*, for example, may be read within what has become a standard critique whereby the English hero, Edward Waverley, a youth brought up on reading too much romance, is briefly attracted to the romantic connotations of the Jacobite Highland cause (most notably encapsulated in his attraction to a woman) only to wake from this dream; to realise that the future lies with the government forces, the Hanoverian dynasty, and a more suitable woman; and to utter the much-quoted lines that 'the romance of his life was ended, and that its real history had now commenced'.²⁸

Lukács's reading is in many ways convincing, and it certainly played a significant role in attracting much-deserved critical attention to Scott in the second half of the twentieth century. It is,

²⁷Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London 1962) (published originally in Russian in 1938).

²⁸Walter Scott, *Waverley*, Magnum Opus edition, vols. i and ii, at ii, 296; page numbers will hereafter be given in brackets after quotation.

however, as is well-recognised, oversimplistic, concerning itself with the broad narrative thrust of the novels at the expense of much of the detail. Scott's novels, in their first edition formats, consist, after all, of an average of three volumes with 330 pages per volume, and it seems valid to ask why Scott wrote such long fictions if writing to such a straightforward formula. The answer, of course, is that the structures of the novels as Lukács identifies them form only the skeletons of the fiction. What is at least equally interesting in the Waverley Novels is what occurs between these bare bones; the *excess* or *residue* between the spaces of narrative. It is to these we must look for a more complex and revealing reading of Scott's approach to the Highlands in his fiction.

This approach to Scott's novels is, surprisingly, frequently overlooked. Too often the novels are read as if they are merely an extension of Scott's public persona, or as if his actions as a public figure and his statements of belief in reviews and historical writings can be unquestioningly imported into any reading of his fictional texts. While, of course, it would be ridiculous to suggest that nothing of Scott the man made its way into his fiction, it seems a mistake to assume too much when reading the Waverley Novels. Perhaps even more significantly, while as historical novels the texts strain at generic boundaries, the Tales, Romances and Novels of the Author of *Waverley*, are ultimately fictional, not historical texts, something which seems forgotten when, for example, Murray Pittock describes Scott's fiction as having an unfortunate 'fictional slant' beneath 'his tempting claim to be writing history'.²⁹

Yet to approach the Waverley Novels via their essentially fictional nature is supported by Scott himself and indeed implicit in the anonymous publication of them. By publishing in this way, Scott seems to be deliberately putting distance between his public self and the fictional space of the texts, a process continued in the 'Chinese box' effects of the layers of Introductions, Notes and Prefaces which eventually surround the novels. It is also an approach to fiction

²⁹Pittock, *The Invention of Scotland*, 85.

implicit in Scott's own description of his creative methods. In the often quoted 'Introductory Epistle' to *The Fortunes of Nigel* the Author of *Waverley* comments:³⁰

I think there is a dæmon who seats himself on the feather of my pen when I begin to write, and leads it astray from the purpose ... If I resist the temptation, as you advise me ... I am no more the same author, than the dog in a wheel, condemned to go round and round for hours, is like the same dog merrily chasing his own tail, and gambolling in all the frolic of unrestrained freedom. In short, on such occasions, I think I am bewitched.

As David Hewitt has pointed out,³¹ not only is this a wonderful metaphor for the workings of the Romantic imagination, it is a reminder to the reader that the Author of *Waverley* is not writing to fill up any pre-planned structure, but is, on the contrary, describing the act of creation as one of process; a site where the imagination is given free play.

This model of the fiction suggests that we are to see the Waverley Novels as a site of imaginative interaction where the various perceptions of the Highlands inherited by the Author of *Waverley* are put into play and exposed to the Romantic imagination, in order that these models of identity for both the Highlands and Scotland may be interrogated and re-examined. Read thus the Waverley Novels emerge, not as responsible for the creation of a Highlands which Womack describes as 'locked into an imperial sign-system',³² but rather as an interrogation of that romantic, pastoral, barbarian or historically redundant package; as an exploration of its boundaries, and a negotiation of its place within any future construction of Scottish identity. If this is the case, we must ask what kinds of

³⁰'Introductory Epistle' in Walter Scott, *The Fortunes of Nigel*, EEWN vol. xiii, ed. Frank Jordan (Edinburgh 2004), 10.

³¹David Hewitt, 'Walter Scott', in *The History of Scottish Literature* iii, *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Douglas Gifford (Aberdeen 1988), 65–87, at 71.

³²Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, 47.

interrogation takes place in the novels, and what kind of identity, if any, is finally proposed.

This may be assessed by returning to the parent of the Waverley Novels, *Waverley* itself. As Lukács's model suggests, on the face of it this is a novel constructed around binary oppositions, the meeting places of history which recur in Scott's fiction between romance and realism, history and myth, Highlands and Lowlands, Jacobite and Hanoverian. However, a closer reading of the novel suggests that rather than being a model of the subjugation of these oppositions one to the other as part of the inevitable path of history, the novel is, rather, an interrogation of these oppositions as a relevant episteme in which to construct both personal and national identity; an interrogation, in short, of the rigid models for looking at the Highlands as described by Womack and inherited by Scott at the time when he came to write his fiction.

The first of these models is, as we might expect, closely linked to the kind of prejudices offered by John Pinkerton, and voiced throughout the *Waverley* texts by characters such as Henry Gow in *The Fair Maid*, prejudices which construct the Highlander only in terms of savage, robber, rogue or thief.³³ In *Waverley*, such a model is proposed by Colonel Talbot who, we are told, is a man 'strongly tinged ... with those prejudices which are peculiarly English' (ii, 214). To Talbot, the Highlanders are '“barren, barren, beggars all”' (ii, 247), and despite Waverley's attempts to persuade him otherwise, he refuses to acquaint himself with any of Edward's Highland friends. 'Indeed he went farther', the narrator tells us:

and characterised the Baron as the most intolerable formal pedant he had ever had the misfortune to meet with, and the Chief of Glennaquoich as a Frenchified Scotchman, possessing all the cunning and plausibility of the nation where he was educated, with the proud, vindictive, and turbulent humour of that of his birth. (ii, 214)

³³Walter Scott, *The Fair Maid of Perth*, EEWN vol. xxi, edd. A. D. Hook and Donald Mackenzie (Edinburgh 1999).

These are precisely the kinds of images of the Highlands which we might expect Scott to counteract in his fiction, and in *Waverley* itself they are interrogated and found wanting by the relationships which Edward forms with the Mac-Ivors and the hosts of insights which the reader is given into the sophisticated social and political structures operating in the Highlands.

However, what is surely more problematic is the model of the Highlands which Scott posits in place of such Highland phobia and it is to this that we must turn to examine whether Scott does indeed simply construct an empty romantic edifice or if he offers a more complex framework within which to position the region. This may be assessed by a closer examination of Edward Waverley himself.

Edward Waverley arrives in Scotland, and indeed the Highlands, ignorant of both its landscape and its inhabitants. Having had some vague hints from both his aunt and his Jacobite tutor that he must be wary of the Scottish people, his first impressions of the country are very much in the vein of what a contemporary Englishman might be expected to note; poverty and squalor. His first impression of Tully-veolan for instance, is one of cottages 'miserable in the extreme' and village girls of whom an Englishman:

might have wished the clothes less scanty, the feet and legs somewhat protected from the weather, the head and complexion shrouded from the sun, or perhaps might even have thought the whole person and dress considerably improved, by a plentiful application of spring water, with a *quantum sufficit* of soap. (i, 77)

On realising that Tully-veolan is on the edge of the Highlands, moreover, Waverley again very quickly adopts the standard set of responses to that region. The Highlands, he realises, constitute another country, a land beyond that which he has hitherto regarded as forming part of British identity. Learning of Fergus and Flora Mac-Ivor and of the Highland practice of blackmail we are told that 'Waverley could not help starting at a story which bore so much resemblance to one of his own day-dreams' (i, 159). Fascinated by what he hears of the region, he asks that he may make 'an excursion

into the neighbouring Highlands, whose dusky barrier of mountains had already excited his wish to penetrate beyond them' (i, 163).

Waverley, then, following a well-trodden path of post-1746 thought, is at first repulsed by the squalor of Scotland, and then attracted to what he perceives to be a land of myth and story lying tantalisingly beyond the dusky barrier of the Highland line. His impression, moreover, that he is entering the landscape of romance and story—a land constructed out of his own youthful reading, the kind of 'nonsensical trash' which the young Scott described as being the basis of his own education—seems initially confirmed as he meets with the romantic hero in the character of Fergus, and the romantic heroine *par excellence* in the form of the bejewelled, harp-playing Flora.

However, Waverley enters the Highlands not through the seemingly ephemeral dusky barrier of his imagination, but rather by a long and arduous journey through bog and quagmire, a circumstance which should alert both himself and the reader to the fact that he is entering not a fairy land, but a very real geographical space, while many of his experiences in the novel seem designed to deconstruct his own romantic perceptions of the region. This is indeed implicit from the outset, for while the narrator may tell us that Waverley believes he has found a fund of circumstances 'for the exercise of a romantic imagination'—a common perception of the Highlands by 1814—he also comments that 'the only circumstance which assorted ill with the rest, was the cause of his journey—the Baron's milk cows!' (i, 173).³⁴

³⁴Cairns Craig argues that this ironic commentary on the romantic forces within *Waverley* is a sign of 'the novelist of progressive history' finding himself 'inextricably bound into a conflict with the very medium of his writing' (Craig, *Out of History*, 71). While this reading is useful it again presupposes that Scott is writing to some pre-determined Lukácsian plan which is untenable in the face of the circumstances of Scotland's situation. I would suggest, rather, that the Waverley Novels are an imaginative site where the Author of Waverley allows apparently conflicting forces free play.

A similar deconstruction of the patina which Edward attempts to lay over his experiences in the Highlands is also implied in what on the face of it seems the quintessential romantic experience, his encounter with Flora by the waterfall. In *Waverley*, this provokes 'the wild feeling of romantic delight' which amounts 'almost to a sense of pain' (i, 237) but again the narrator simultaneously deconstructs such interpretations by reminding us that Flora's behaviour is not that of a noble savage, but rather has been artificially contrived to impress a young English officer. Flora, we are reminded, 'possessed excellent sense', and like all beautiful women is 'conscious of her own power'; and thus she 'gave the romance of the scene, and other accidental circumstances, full weight in appreciating the feelings with which *Waverley* seemed obviously to be impressed' (i, 236).

Scenes like these in the novel, and the relationship which is thus established between narrator and reader so that we are always held at a distance from *Waverley*, serve both to examine the ways in which a romantic image of the Highlands may be constructed, and simultaneously to interrogate such images, questioning their relevance as an appropriate grammar with which to negotiate one's way around the discourses brought into play within Scott's depictions of both the Highland experience and landscape. *Waverley*, like many of Scott's readers, persists in his own romantic construction of the region and it is this which ultimately results in his aligning himself with the Jacobite cause. Believing himself to be in a land of myth and story—a land denuded of all political or practical implications—*Waverley* fails to realise the full ideological ramifications of the events which surround him. On the eve of the rebellion Fergus reminds him that if he is not certain of his political convictions he should go to England, but *Waverley*, foolishly believing that it is his best hope of winning over Flora, decides to stay. ' "And is this your very sober earnest" ', asks Fergus with a shrewd insight into *Waverley*'s character, " "or are we in the land of romance and fiction?" ' (i, 285). *Waverley* may fail to recognise the

distinction, but Fergus is in full command of the severity of the situation.

Such incidents, along with Flora's repeated assertion that Waverley could never be happy with a woman such as herself, are reminders that the romantic construction through which events are viewed is one believed in by no-one but Waverley. It is this, in fact, which he discovers in the course of the novel, for as he fights in earnest, he realises that rebellion and battle cannot be safely contained within the bounds of story, but are grave and bloody events. Ultimately it is Fergus who makes this clear, for on the eve of Mac-Ivor's own capture he reminds Edward that the failure of the rebellion will have serious and damaging effects. ' "The vessel is going to pieces" ' he tells Waverley ' "and it is full time for all who can, to get into the long-boat and leave her" ' (ii, 278). ' "The Hanoverian ministers always deserved to be hanged for rascals" ', he continues, ' "but now, if they get the power in their hands ... they will deserve the gallows as fools, if they leave a single clan in the Highlands in a situation to be again troublesome to government" ' (ii, 279). Not only are Fergus's words prophetic, they are a reminder that while Waverley may have constructed the enterprise romantically, for Fergus it has always been both real and desperate.

Read in this way *Waverley* may be seen not simply as a novel where a romantic model of the Highlands is either constructed or subjugated, but rather, one where not only Colonel Talbot's overt prejudices are discarded as unsuitable, but equally, the appropriateness of situating Highland experience in the category of romance, story and myth is interrogated and found wanting. For Waverley the experience of the rebellion has been one of learning the dangers of constructing a real geographical region in such terms. When he recognises that 'the romance of his life was ended' and 'its real history had now commenced' (ii, 296), this much-quoted phrase may be seen less as a comment on his foolishness in joining the rebellion, but rather as one on the inappropriateness of constructing such experiences within a romantic and mythopoeic discourse. *Waverley*, consequently, may be read less as a novel where the

Highlands are constructed in rigid and vacuous categories, than as one which concerns itself with the dangers of constructing identity—both national and personal—within such absolute models. It is this that necessitates ‘one addition’ to the ‘fine old apartment’ (ii, 412) at Tully-veolan, the portrait of Fergus and Edward. Placed at the heart of what is to be Waverley’s adult identity, the portrait is a reminder that such identity must contain within it a recognition of other possibilities, alternative models of the self which prevent rigid, final construction. Waverley’s path at the end of the novel has taken one direction, but this implies not a subjugation of one mode of experience by another but rather embraces within it—as his proposal to have Flora staying with them as a kind of sister would imply—other possibilities, other aspects of experience which refuse to be silenced. *Waverley*, I would suggest, emerges not as a site where Highland identity is defined, but rather one where both it and a wider Scottish sense of identity is deferred, the novel embracing within itself seemingly conflicting, but truly multiplistic, aspects of experience.

Similar interrogations of the received models for perceiving the Highlands are also found in Scott’s other Jacobite novels, *Rob Roy* (1818) and *Redgauntlet* (1824), which, like Scott’s first novel, negotiate the whole concept of positing identity in any straightforward form.³⁵ *Rob Roy*, like *Waverley*, is a novel which concerns itself with the appropriateness of rigid categories to describe Highland, or indeed any other form of experience, and it is this complex and ambiguous aspect of Rob himself which the Author of *Waverley* describes as the basis of his attraction to the historical figure:

It is this strong contrast betwixt the civilised and cultivated mode of life on the one side of the Highland line, and the wild and lawless

³⁵Walter Scott, *Redgauntlet*, EEWN vol. xvii, edd. G. A. M. Wood with David Hewitt (Edinburgh 1997). Walter Scott, *Rob Roy*, Magnum Opus edition vols. vii and viii; page numbers for both these novels will hereafter be given in brackets after quotation.

adventures which were habitually undertaken and achieved by one who dwelt on the opposite side of that ideal boundary, which creates the interest attached to his name. (vii, p. viii)

As in *Waverley*, then, it is the border lands which are of interest to Scott, the junctures where our received categories of experience begin to disintegrate. Frank Osbaldistone, like Waverley, arrives in Scotland with rather a low opinion of its inhabitants; a preconceived idea that they are not entirely to be trusted. Again, like Edward, he also brings to Scotland the notion that a sharp line may be drawn between the romance and poetry to which he is attracted, and the commercial life to which he is so opposed. Defining experience thus, Frank believes that his first impressions of Glasgow may be easily defined as an opposition between the commercial city, and those who live around its borders:

The dusky mountains of the Western Highlands often sent forth wilder tribes to frequent the marts of St Mungo's favourite city. Hordes of wild, shaggy, dwarfish cattle and ponies, conducted by Highlanders, as wild, as shaggy, and sometimes as dwarfish, as the animals they had in charge, often traversed the streets of Glasgow. Strangers gazed with surprise on the antique and fantastic dress, and listened to the unknown and dissonant sounds of their language. (viii, 24)

Rob Roy, however, is essentially a novel which deconstructs such rigid categories and what Frank learns is that while there may be an ideal boundary between Highlands and Lowlands, the regions are in fact intrinsically related to each other. This relationship emerges, in part at least, via the character of Rob Roy, sometimes Campbell, sometimes MacGregor, who crosses easily between what are initially posited as discrete arenas of experience.

The character of Rob Roy offers an interesting example of the way in which the Author of *Waverley* interrogates those models of Highland experience handed down to him. The title of the novel had been suggested by Scott's publisher, Archibald Constable, and Scott himself had been cautious, voicing an anxiety about 'having to write

up to a name' and about failing to meet the public expectations which such a name would inevitably raise.³⁶ The story of Rob Roy had been first introduced to the London public in 1723 by a pamphlet called *The Highland Rogue* where, as Peter Womack points out, the Rob portrayed conforms to one of the standard perceptions of Highlanders as part fool, part Robin Hood.³⁷ This, however, was not the kind of Rob to emerge in Scott's novel, a fact recognised by Constable's partner Robert Cadell as he writes to his senior:³⁸

I have very great doubts of this being so good as *any* of the former novels, and altho the title is excellent I fear the public will meet with a severe disappointment—there is less variety in it than any of the former—a bad, bitter bad story—much of the same cast of character—And Rob far from what every one expects from him—the general expectation is that Rob is to be the most unbending villain—thief—robber—rascal—but *good* in him for all that—in the Novel he has some of these traits, but figures far less on the stage than the title leads the reader to expect, indeed he appears scarcely in any shape till towards the end of the second volume.

Luckily, Scott's readers were more discerning; the first edition of 10,000 was sold out in two weeks and the novel went on to sell 40,000 copies in Scott's lifetime. Yet Cadell's comments are revealing. Interestingly, too, as a reader he has been misled for Rob does appear early in the novel, although in his Campbell guise, thereby signalling that Scott is not creating the stock eighteenth-century image of a Highlander, but a figure altogether more subtle and complex. Similarly, by making his first appearance in this way, he is a reminder that the boundary Frank has drawn between romantic and commercial life is inadequate.

³⁶See Lockhart, *Memoirs* iv, 68.

³⁷Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, 12.

³⁸Robert Cadell to Archibald Constable, 26 December 1817. National Library of Scotland MS 322, fo. 252 r/v. I am grateful to the National Library of Scotland for permission to quote from this document.

This deconstruction of Frank's boundary between the commercial life of his father and his own romantic impulses is in fact at the heart of the novel, and at the heart of any construction of Scottish identity posited within it. Frank has travelled north to escape the business life which his father has him destined for. Somewhat ironically, however, it is in Scotland that he discovers himself to be the agent by which his father's commercial concerns will be salvaged. The description of Glasgow continues:

Yet even then the mountain glens were over-peopled although thinned occasionally by famine or by the sword, and many of their inhabitants strayed down to Glasgow—there formed settlements—there sought and found employment, although different, indeed, from that of their native hills. This supply of a hardy and useful population was of consequence to the prosperity of the place, furnished the means of carrying on the few manufactures which the town already boasted, and laid the foundation of its future prosperity. (viii, 25)

This is a shrewd analysis of the relationship between Highlands and Lowlands in post-Union Scotland, but it is also a reminder that the boundaries between the Highlands—ostensibly the land of romance—and the commercial life of Lowland Scotland are not discrete. On the contrary, what Frank discovers is the Highlands are intrinsically linked to his father's commercial enterprises. The Highlands, Bailie Jarvie points out, have been 'keepit quiet' by 'siller', by an economic policy that recognises that economic hardship in the Highlands will lead to disquiet (viii, 135). 'I do not see how this concerns Mr Campbell, much less my father's affairs', says Frank (viii, 136), but Jarvie chides his naivety:

'Why', said he, 'if these bills are not paid, the Glasgow merchant comes on the Hieland lairds, whae hae deil a boddle o' siller, and will like ill to spew up what is item a' spent—They will turn desperate—five hundred will rise that might hae sitten at hame—the deil will gae ower Jack Wabster—and the stopping of your father's house will hasten the outbreak that's been sae lang biding us'. (viii, 137)

The outbreak of the 1715 Rebellion was of course much more complex, but Bailie Jarvie's words are a timely reminder to Frank that, just as Rob Roy cannot be categorised in any simple construction—'ower bad for blessing, and ower gude for banning' (viii, 380) as Andrew Fairservice describes him—so too the boundaries between Highlands and Lowlands, poetry and commerce can only ever be ideal. Frank's recognition of this is part of his journey from boyhood to learning 'to live like a man' (vii, 20) as his father describes it, and it is a journey which, like that of Edward Waverley, involves not a renunciation of the Highlands, but, rather, a recognition of the inappropriateness of constructing them within the rigid terms of romance and story; a recognition that categories of experience are, of course, intrinsically confluent, the distinctions between them eliding in any genuine construction of identity.

This notion of elision is, indeed, built into the very structure of Scott's last Jacobite novel, *Redgauntlet*. More than any other of Scott's fictions, *Redgauntlet* is an examination of the construction of identity as process. Taking the form of a developmental text, the novel explores the coming to manhood of its protagonists Alan Fairford and Darsie Latimer. Beginning in epistolary form, the novel seemingly juxtaposes the young men, Alan on the side of rationality and Enlightenment Edinburgh, Darsie as a dreamer, a romancer, full of 'Quixotical expectation' (xvii, 12) and 'waggish, over waggish' (xvii, 9) as Fairford senior describes him. However, just as the two men discover that such absolute constructions of identity are inadequate, so too the dual construction of the novel collapses in on itself, suggesting that such binary epistemes offer no valid construction of identity. For Darsie, moreover, the discovery of identity emerges as fundamentally linked to that of the Jacobite Rebellions and of the Highlands, for while, like so many of Scott's young men, he believes Jacobitism to be consigned to the realms of story and the past, his road to adulthood involves a recognition that not only is Jacobitism alive and well and living on the Solway, but that his own identity is intrinsically bound up with his family's Jacobite history. Wandering Willie's Tale contains the secret of

Darsie's identity—the horseshoe mark on his forehead—and as Latimer recognises it as he turns to the mirror, it is to learn that any renewed rebellion depends on his participation as the representative of the family of Herries.

What distinguishes *Redgauntlet* from *Waverley* and *Rob Roy* is, of course, the fact that while these novels are based on historical events, *Redgauntlet* deals with an entirely fictional Jacobite rebellion. While there is evidence that Charles Edward visited Britain after 1746, there is no evidence for an historical event such as that described in the novel.³⁹ The reader, therefore, is asked to reflect on why Scott chose this material and, if he is writing about Scottish identity, what such a choice might imply. What it suggests is that in *Redgauntlet* Scott is writing about the emotional residue of Jacobitism, and the negotiation of the place of this residue or excess—something which cannot be accounted for in any reading of his work based simply on subjugation—in any construction of Scottish identity. This becomes apparent at the close of the novel, for while *Redgauntlet* must admit, as General Campbell allows the prince to leave, that 'the cause is lost forever' (xvii, 373), the gentlemen present are also 'stung with feelings which almost overpowered the better reasons under which they had acted' (xvii, 374), 'their feelings struggling against the dictates of their reason' (xvii, 375). Jacobitism is thus positioned within the novel's construction of identity not as a defeated cause, but rather, as an excess or residue which like the painting of Fergus and Edward, disrupts any final or absolute construction of self; an emotional force which cannot be easily silenced, but which must be given space in any future construction of identity. Moreover, lest any reader should object that this excess is insignificant, in that it is consigned to the realms of emotion, they would do well to remember that the very construction of the novel, as well as Darsie and Alan's journey into

³⁹For the historical background to the events presented in the novel see 'Historical Note', *Redgauntlet*, 442.

manhood, has been based upon the inadequacy of constructing experience in such binary terms.

Read in this way, *Redgauntlet* is a reminder of the dangers of constructing identity, both personal and national, within fixed epistemic frameworks. As the last word by the Author of *Waverley* on the Jacobite rebellions of the eighteenth century, it is also a reminder that if the General Preface to the Waverley Novels suggests that Scottish identity could be straightforwardly constructed, the novels themselves suggest something far more complex, offering an alternative to the models of the Highlands which Scott had inherited in their own refusal to posit the region in any fixed or final terms.

These texts imply that the Waverley Novels emerge not as a site where Scott constructs a romantic, empty image for the Highlands, but rather, one where he explores the dangers of constructing identity in these or any other rigid terms. These dangers are, moreover, frequently signalled throughout Scott's fiction, becoming apparent when we consider the fate of those in the Waverley texts who fail to accommodate such a fluid or flexible sense of self; one thinks of Connachar in the *Fair Maid*, for example, or of Allan MacAulay in *A Legend of the Wars of Montrose*,⁴⁰ characters who, as they fail to develop from the models of the Highlander they have set for themselves, simply disappear from the text. Most pertinently, however, we should consider the fate of Elspat MacTavish, the Highland widow of one of Scott's later fictions.

Written immediately after his own financial crash, 'The Highland Widow' is undoubtedly one of Scott's bleakest meditations on the Highlands.⁴¹ The story of the relationship between a Highland mother and her son, it can be read as a metaphor for the dangers of failing to construct identity in fluid terms, of insisting that Highland identity must be unchanging or fixed. Elspat, we are told, was the

⁴⁰Walter Scott, *A Legend of the Wars of Montrose*, EEWN vol. viib, ed. J. H. Alexander (Edinburgh 1995).

⁴¹Walter Scott, 'The Highland Widow', in *Chronicles of the Canongate*, EEWN vol. xx, ed. Lamont; page numbers will hereafter be given in brackets after quotation.

wife of Hamish MacTavish, whose habits were 'of the old Highland stamp' (76-7). The morality of the old couple, similarly, 'was of the old Highland cast, faithful friends and fierce enemies' (77). Constructed thus, these Highlanders are in the image of common perceptions of the Highlands; the models inherited by the Author of *Waverley* as he began to write the novels. However, 'those days of perilous, though frequently successful depredation, began to be abridged after the failure of the expedition of Prince Charles Edward' (77), the narrator tells us; garrisons are settled in the Highlands, MacTavish is surprised by redcoats, captured and slain. Elspat, however, continues to live somehow in the Highlands where, 'She had not forgotten she was the widow of MacTavish Mhor, or that the child who trotted by her knee might, such were her imaginations, emulate one day the fame of his father' (78). Time passes, the child grows, and while Elspat may wish to construct him in the image of his father, Hamish Bean knows that this is not possible. 'The young', the narrator tells us, 'see the present state of this changeful world more keenly than the old:

Much attached to his mother, and disposed to do all in his power for her support, Hamish yet perceived, when he mixed with the world, that the trade of the cateran was now alike dangerous and discreditable, and that if he were to emulate his father's prowess, it must be in some other line of warfare, more consonant to the opinions of the present day. (79)

Chided by his mother for his failure to conform to her image of what a Highlander should be, Hamish leaves home and is absent for many days. During this time Elspat imagines him returning 'at the head of a daring band, with pipes playing, and banners flying' (84). When Hamish does return, however, it is to tell her that he is 'enlisted in one of the new regiments' (88) and about to leave to fight the French in America. "Dearest mother", he tells Elspat:

'how shall I convince you that you live in this land of our fathers, as if our fathers were yet living? You walk as it were in a dream,

surrounded by the phantoms of those who have been long with the dead'. (89)

Elspat, however, refuses to be convinced, and while she 'seemed to be reconciled' (93), she constructs a plan to keep Hamish from leaving. Drugging his parting cup, Elspat ensures that Hamish will sleep beyond the time appointed to meet his regiment, and as she watches him sleep, she says:

'They say the Highlands are changed; but I see Ben Cruachan rear his crest as high as ever into the evening sky—no one hath yet herded his kine on the depth of Loch Awe—and yonder oak does not yet bend like a willow. The children of the mountains will be such as their fathers, until the mountains themselves shall be levelled with the strath'. (97)

It is not hard to guess the denouement. A party of soldiers are sent to look for Hamish, urged by his mother he resists arrest, the commander approaches and as Elspat cries ' "Now, spare not your father's blood to defend your father's hearth!" ' he shoots, killing the commanding officer dead (110). Inevitably, Hamish is taken prisoner and condemned to death. Elspat, as we find her at the opening of the story, is left to despair and madness.

'The Highland Widow' tells a salutary lesson, interrogating as it does the dangers of constructing Highland identity in static romantic or nostalgic terms, in the categories inherited by Scott as he began to write. To do so, the story suggests, can only lead to misery and despair, for the Highlands, as we have seen them in the Waverley texts, are infinitely more flexible; irreducible to any final or absolute form of identity. In his review of Duncan Forbes's *Culloden Papers*, Scott suggests that if cleared of its people by a brutal economic policy the Highlands could become 'the fairy ground for romance and poetry and the subject of experiment for the professors of speculation, political and economical'.⁴² But if this was to happen, he

⁴²Walter Scott, 'On Culloden Papers; comprising an extensive and interesting Correspondence from the Year 1625 to 1748', *Quarterly Review*, January 1816; reprinted in Scott, *Prose Works* xx, 1–93, at 93.

suggests, it would be to clear the region too of all that was both 'good and evil' in it; to strip it, in short, of any kind of vibrant identity.

A resistance to such constructions of the Highlands is, I would suggest, at the very heart of Scott's fiction. Scott does not create an image for either the region or the Scottish nation that is simply a 'museum of history and culture, denuded of the political dynamic which [keeps] culture alive and developing', as Murray Pittock suggests,⁴³ for such an identity is by implication static. On the contrary, what takes place in the Waverley texts is rather an interrogation of a range of preconceived notions of the Highlands—both negative and romantic—and the conclusion that such models are each in turn inadequate. Identity in the Waverley Novels, essentially a site of imaginative play, is continuously posited as complex and fluid, consisting not of fixed epistemic models, but rather of residue and excess, constantly resisting closure. If the Highlands are inscribed within a romantic lexis, it is only that the very terms of romanticism may be ironically undercut in the next paragraph; if they are condemned as barbarian by Gow or Talbot, it is only that we might soon be shown what is good in them; if the Jacobite cause is defeated, it is only that it might re-emerge in the next novel; if identity ever appears cut and dried, it is that it might be deconstructed, as Darsie Latimer learns, by a glance in the mirror, a chance twist of the forehead.⁴⁴ If, indeed, the Author of *Waverley* is forced to reveal his own self, it is that he might construct yet another identity in the notes and paraphernalia which surround the Magnum edition.⁴⁵

Read thus, the Waverley Novels emerge not as a site where Scottish identity is constructed in elegiac or in glossy romantic packages; they are rather one where these very images of the Highlands may be reinterrogated and found wanting. The act of

⁴³Pittock, *The Invention of Scotland*, 87.

⁴⁴For an interesting view of Scott's reasons for revisiting the Jacobite rebellions in his fiction see Craig, *Out Of History*, 69–72.

⁴⁵For an interesting commentary on the significance of the Magnum notes and prefaces see David Hewitt, 'Walter Scott', 69.

writing the Waverley Novels thus emerges as one not of creating Highland identity, but of deconstructing it; essentially an act of deferral. Scott may have believed that in 1814 Scotland and the Highlands needed some kind of fictional identity if they were to maintain any kind of separate status in what was emerging as a very successful British Union. The Author of *Waverley*, it seems, also knew the pitfalls of constructing that identity in inflexible terms. It is this interrogation of the notion of identity itself, rather than Scott's defining of it in absolute romantic categories, which allows us still to be debating his role in the creation of modern perceptions of the Highlands.

**Highlands and Lowlands, Romance and Realism:
The Fiction of Neil Munro**

DOUGLAS GIFFORD

This essay claims that the fiction of Neil Munro, for far too long neglected or read as entertaining Highland escapism, is in fact of major importance both in terms of its quality and in terms of its satirical and deeply critical revaluation of what Highland social culture had become in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Munro, very much a child of Inveraray and Argyll, yet in his adult life a Lowland-based Glasgow journalist dissociated from it, has both a Highland and Lowland perspective on the territory and culture from which he came. Yet far from associating himself with romanticising and escapist tendencies in the Scottish culture of his time, such as those movements in fiction, poetry, and drama termed 'Kailyard' or 'Celtic Twilight', in his best work—such as *The Lost Pibroch* (1896), *John Splendid* (1898), *Gilian the Dreamer* (1899) and *The New Road* (1914)—he consistently renegotiated questions of Highland identity and values with subtlety and sympathy, yet probingly analysing fundamental weaknesses in his Argyll Highlanders' perception of themselves, as well as initiating twentieth-century clarification of Lowland and British perceptions of Highland history and culture.¹

This claim presupposes that popular and earlier views of Highland history and culture were inaccurate and biased. That said, the essays on Lowland perceptions of the Highlands in this volume reveal a fascinating series of expedient shifts of valuation, in all of which the Highlands emerge as a territory which is as much a construct of mind as a loosely defined geographical topography. And

¹A version of this essay has already appeared as 'John Splendids and Jaunty Jocks': Neil Munro, the Highlands and Scottish Fiction', in *Exploring New Roads: Essays on Neil Munro*, edd. R. W. Renton and B. D. Osborne (Colonsay 2003), 37–67.

perhaps, with hindsight, we realise that they were never so much of a concrete threat to Lowland peace and prosperity, as a convenient site for ideological appropriation by the Lowlands, and a timeless and convenient raiding-ground for British politicians and social leaders in the formation of expedient politics and social theory. One of the most breathtaking and cunning appropriations of the Highlands was surely Prime Minister Pitt's transformation of troublesome northern caterans into loyal British regiments at the end of the eighteenth century—an ironic and metaphoric reversal of actual and historic clan raids and blackmail.²

For all Pitt's redefinition of Highland rebels as front-line defenders of Empire, and for all the illustrious role of Highland regiments in Napoleonic wars and imperial battles, Lowland opinions of the Highlands in the years around the great potato famines of the 1840s reveal how volatile nineteenth-century Lowland Scottish—and British—views of the Highlands were becoming. Within a year or two, sympathy for the plight of a simple people could turn into contempt for their feckless irresponsibility (mirroring contemporary attitudes to Ireland)—and back again.³ Clearance and Famine can thus be deplored or condoned, according to bias and perspective. While James Grant's best-selling Victorian novel *The Romance of War; or The Highlanders in Spain* (1846) glorified the robust, hard-drinking yet noble kilted regiments in the Napoleonic wars, *The Scotsman* could blame the improvidence of Highlanders for their appalling troubles during famine. Yet novelist William Black (the darling of the lending libraries) went on to present even newer and more fashionable Victorian stereotypes of the Highland chief, outstandingly in *Macleod of Dare* (1878)—in which he cast a romantic aura of noble savagery around his young

²For the suggestion that this initiative was first mooted by William Dalrymple, second earl of Stair, see Allan. I. Macinnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart, 1603–1788* (East Linton 1996), 216.

³See Krisztina Fenyő, *Contempt, Sympathy and Romance: Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands and the Clearances During the Famine Years, 1845–1855* (East Linton 2000).

Mull chieftain of McLeod, whose curious mixture of barbarity and breeding temporarily captivates a famous London actress. She plays with her fashionable toy princeling for a while, then drops him when the social season ends—a mistake, this, since he carries her off from London in his galley and, since she won't be persuaded, sinks the galley in a storm and drowns them both, appropriately enough, in the Sound of Mull. What mixed messages! —trivial London (but essential to maintain readers' interest and very much the needed foil for romantic Highlands); noble savages (but ultimately tiresome in their obsessive and anachronistic pride of race); dark undercurrents to superficially socialised natives (so don't play around with primitives!).

Yet this typical declension of Lowland perspectives of the Highlands into melodrama and subject-matter for entertainment continued alongside more sinister manipulations. The most obvious of these is exemplified in later nineteenth-century Lowland collusion with fashionable Victorian Balmorality, a powerful aid to further exploitation of the Highlander as redoubtable warrior and bulwark of Empire. Once again, public opinion could be volatile, as Iain Crichton Smith bitterly points out in *An Honourable Death* (1992), his revisionary novel on that quintessential Victorian and heroic stereotype of the noble Scottish Highland warrior, Brigadier-General Sir Hector Macdonald VC. Known throughout Britain and the world as 'Fighting Mac' for his military exploits in Afghanistan and Africa, Macdonald, son of a Ross-shire crofter, was at first adored as the hardest of Britain's sons; then, after discovery of his alleged homosexuality, disgraced to the point of suicide. Smith's novel contrasts the romantic view of Highland imperial achievement with the grotesque and ironic reality of the recurrent situation in which Highland regiments killed and were killed by enemies of Britain, both sides often unable to understand, far less speak, the English of their imperial manipulators. Military Kailyard fiction and poetry of the second half of the nineteenth century celebrates and sentimentalises as heroes such cannon-fodder, and the disproportionate contribution of the Highlands to the terrible death-

roll of two World Wars must surely stem in large part from the successful creation of that iconography. Queen Victoria's Scottish chaplain, Norman Macleod, turned out several of the most successful of these useful Empire-endorsing fictions. More insidiously, 'Fiona McLeod', the essential feminine Celtic spirit discovered inside himself by Surrey-based journalist William Sharp, ended Victoria's century with her/his Celtic Twilight pseudo-celebrations of the Gaels and their culture, in novels like *Pharais: A Romance of the Isles* (1894), and *The Mountain Lovers* (1895), portraying them as doomed children of the mist, last remnants of an ancient poetic race, now brain-fevered and dying into their Western oceans. Romantic though this might appear, it had a more sinister political subtext, as it can be seen as effectively condoning a political attitude of *laissez-faire* towards the, by now, all too restive Highlands, taken over as they were by absentee landlords of great hunting estates, landscape painters, and an educational system which outlawed the speaking of Gaelic in schools—while at the same time Ernest Renan, Matthew Arnold and Grant Allan paid glorious lip-service to Celtic achievement in the world. Two contrasting quotations here from Holbrook Jackson's chapter on 'The Discovery of the Celt' in his classic study of 1913, *The Eighteen-Nineties*, illustrate some of the worst excesses of pseudo-Celtic enthusiasm. The first is 'Fiona Macleod', indulging her poetic sensibility in lament for the glory that had been that of the Gael:⁴

Strange reversals, strange fulfilments, may lie on the lap of the gods, but we have no knowledge of these, and hear neither the laughter nor the far voices. But we front a spiritual destiny greater than the height of imperial fortunes, and have that which may send our voices further than the trumpets of East and West. Through ages of slow westering, till now we face the sundown seas, we have learned in continual vicissitude that there are secret ways whereon armies cannot march. And this has been given to us, a more ardent longing,

⁴Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen-Nineties* (London 1913); quotations from Pelican edition (1939), 147.

a more apt passion in the things of outward beauty and in the things of spiritual beauty. Nor it seems to me is there any sadness, or only the serene sadness of a great day's end, that, to others, we reveal in our best the genius of a race whose farewell is in a tragic lighting of torches of beauty around its grave.

If this typically exemplifies a view of the Gael which, for all its apparent dignifying of its subject, could be read as supporting political and social neglect of Gaelic economy and culture, other southern commentators presented a diametrically opposed but equally overblown rhetoric. Jackson quotes Grant Allen, who had in 1891 in *The Fortnightly Review* claimed astonishing Celtic influence over all things English (by which he meant, of course, British). In a grotesquely inflated claim which collapses under the weight of its own pretentious exaggeration, Allen found that Celtic influence had brought about almost every significant achievement and development in late-Victorian Britain, including Home Rule, Land Nationalisation, Socialism, Radicalism, the Tithes' War, and the Crofter Question; it had introduced to political life 'the eloquent young Irishman, the perfervid Highland Scot, the enthusiastic Welshman, the hard-headed Cornish miner', as well as Methodism, Catholicism, the Hebrides, the Scotland Division of Liverpool, and a host of Irish-Scottish Celtic writers:⁵

The Celt in Britain, like Mr Burne-Jones' enchanted princess, has lain silent for ages in enforced long sleep, but the spirit of the century, pushing aside the weeds and briars of privilege and caste, has set free the sleeper at last ...

Celtic Twilight proved to be a literary dawn in Ireland, but its counterpart in Scotland never emerged out of the gloaming. For a decade or so, under Patrick Geddes and his journal of the new Scottish Celticism, *The Evergreen* magazine, with Fiona McLeod, and other painters and poets (and with Rennie Mackintosh its most interesting by-product at the vogue's end), the Lowlands flirted with

⁵*Ibid.*, 147–8.

this latest fashion in Highland appropriation. Then the First World War burst that iridescent bubble for good, and a new wave of dark and sceptical novels of Highland realism and despair began to appear in the 'twenties with the work of Neil Gunn, Iain Macpherson and another, darker pseudonym denoting identification with Celtic ancestry, 'Fionn MacColla' (whose real name was Thomas Douglas Macdonald).⁶

A survey of that later revisioning of the Highlands lies beyond Neil Munro. I am motivated, in presenting him, by two considerations. Firstly, I claim that this is a major Scottish writer who for far too long has been seen as a second-rate Scott or Stevenson, or as the perennially entertaining creator of Para Handy and his crew, the loveable Highland—and Lowland—scamps of that relic of the Clyde, the puffer coal-boat, *The Vital Spark*. Secondly, and as importantly, I claim that he represents that badly undervalued period of Scottish culture from 1890 to 1914, when creative Scots grew heart-sick of the false mythologies and time-serving icons of nineteenth-century Scotland—the chieftains, the stags at bay, the minister and dominie serving simple worthy peasants in bens and glens, the lads of intellectual and high moral parts from simple schools and straths, the Scottish soldier, the Highland Lass—as well as all the cohorts of Lowland Heaven-taught farmer-and-weaver poets. Fed up with these stereotypes, images which had filled the vacuum of Scottish culture in the mid-century, a new breed of writers grew up, Highland and Lowland, with parodic mockery their primary weapon, and their aim the exposure of the ludicrous irrelevance of these stock representations. Their

⁶For examples of Gunn's re-assessment of Highland history, culture and character see *Sun Circle*, *Butcher's Broom* and *Highland River* (Edinburgh 1933, 1934, 1937); and *The Silver Darlings* (London 1941). Virtually all of Gunn's works of fiction and non-fiction contribute to this revaluation; most of his work is available in recent editions. For typical work of Iain Macpherson and 'Fionn MacColla' see Macpherson's *Shepherd's Calendar*, *Land of Our Fathers*, *Pride in the Valley* (London 1931, 1933, 1936) and MacColla's *The Albannach* (London 1932), *And the Cock Crew* (Glasgow 1945), and *The Ministers* (London 1979).

effect was to destroy false and anachronistic territorial boundaries and to reveal the interconnectedness of Lowlands and Highlands. Their work marks the point where old expediential prejudices of Lowlands against Highlands begin at last to crumble. MacDiarmid, Gunn, Gibbon, Mitchison and others of the so-called 'Scottish Renaissance' are usually credited with this dramatic revaluation; but this crucial and necessary destruction of the abundant distortions in Scottish cultural and historical representation generally was as much the work of Neil Munro, together with contemporaries in the Lowlands like George Douglas Brown of *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901). And at this point Lowland and Highland deconstruction of false ideologies merge. Munro's fiction inspires Douglas Brown, who in turn inspired a Highland *Green Shutters* in John MacDougall Hay's *Gillespie* (1914), set in Tarbert, Loch Fyne. This group, which includes Violet Jacob and Marion Angus, and the exiles James Barrie and John Davidson, began to break down the ancient cultural boundaries between Lowlands and Highlands. They deserve now to be seen as major figures in their own right, but also as providing the revisionist basis of what is too often compartmentalised in the 'twenties and 'thirties as 'The Scottish Cultural Renaissance'.

At this juncture we should note elsewhere in this volume Alison Lumsden's re-assessment of Walter Scott's treatment of the Highlands in his fiction.⁷ She argues convincingly that Scott was not the great romanticiser of the Highlands, but—as critics have begun to realise—far more knowledgeable and satiric in his perspectives on the Highlands—and the Lowlands—than we have appreciated. She argues that his work should be read as far more interrogative of both cultures in relation to each other, with a surprisingly early recognition of the beginnings of boundary disintegration, along with a recognition of the increasing mutual interdependency of clanship and commerce. That said, the romanticising influence of Scott—whether this was his intent or not—on the popular view of Scottish

⁷See chapter 6.

history and Highlands is beyond doubt (although Lumsden makes clear that Scott was only a later part of this changing of perception), and novelists like William Black, James Grant, George Macdonald and Stevenson outstandingly added to this, joining the landscape painters in their inflated and exaggerated picture of a fiercely proud yet honest culture, which, while claiming individual equality within the clan, remained deeply subservient to the chief—a subservience which would be identified by writers like Munro and Gunn as the fatal flaw in Highland ideas of valour and kinship, leading to a fatalistic acceptance of Clearance and imperial militarisation. By the end of the century there existed a heady brew of realism and romance which too often went to the heads of the followers of Patrick Geddes and writers like Fiona McLeod. But there were other perspectives on the Highlands. As one of the most prolific and internationally influential writers about the Western Highlands, his work going into ten editions by the First World War, with another eleven by 1940, and a steady reprinting even now, where does Munro stand in relation to nineteenth-century image-making, and to the later ‘Scottish Renaissance’ which claimed revision of all previous portrayals of the Highlands?

Munro was born in Inveraray in 1863, the illegitimate son of a kitchen-maid in the castle. Rumours continue to the present that he was the unacknowledged son of a great Argyll. Whether he was or not, the equivocal nature of his birth pervasively influenced his fiction. On the one hand Munro identified with the great house of Argyll, Inveraray, and the West Highlands as representative of the best of Gaeldom, and leading it from barbarism to a new future in which it would bond with the Lowlands. But opposed to this, Munro also felt an antagonism towards his ancestral house, in which the absence of a father, together with his sensitivity towards the limitations of clan inheritance, leads to a portrayal of a series of Argyll father-chieftains and Campbell aristocrats as apparently noble, but flawed and bombastic, pretentious, anachronistic and representative of the failure of the clan-based Highlands to come to terms with a new world order where clan military and mercenary

values were outmoded and irrelevant. There is throughout his work a tension between instinctive and inherited reverence for martial Gaeldom, brilliantly evoked in scenes of battle such as Montrose's devastation of Argyll in 1644—and, on the other, a compassionate distaste for wanton slaughter, which comes out in sensitivity to the aftermath of such destruction, in the descriptions of smoking ruins and families destroyed. Munro understood Highland ferocity; the reader of his war-poems for 1914 like 'Hey Jock, are ye glad ye 'listed?' and 'Wild Rover Lads' could be forgiven for thinking that Munro was celebrating the continuity of the Highland warrior tradition. It is important to realise that these poems are spoken not so much by himself as by a *persona* representing the traditional blood-instinct for war of his forebears. Fierce sentiments like 'Come awa, Jock, and kill your man!'⁸ have been misunderstood as representing an uglier side of Munro, when arguably they represent his representation of anachronistic Highland sentiments; the 'Jaunty Jock' of this poem is merely one of many dubious heroes following what the poem calls 'your daddy's trade', and the images and values of cocked bonnets and swagger are very much those attacked most ferociously by Munro in his short story 'War', discussed below. Taken with Munro's work as a whole, the poems are part of his complex exposure of ancient attitudes which in 1914 culminated in his greatest attack on Highland military anachronism, his last and greatest novel, *The New Road*, in which General Wade's opening up of the old Highlands to trade with the Lowlands is triumphantly endorsed, and most of all for its destruction of the selfish, sinister and manipulative chieftains at the centre of webs of anachronistic corruption, such as the strutting double-dealing blackmailer

⁸The line is from Munro's apparently bellicose poem, 'Hey, Jock, are ye glad ye 'listed?' Munro intended a collection of his poetry; this was unpublished in his lifetime, but appeared in 1931 with an introduction by John Buchan as *The Poetry of Neil Munro* (Edinburgh 1931; Stevenage 1987). In an early draft of a prefatory note Munro explains that some of his war poems 'take on that spirit of braggadocio which comes so naturally to youth ... and to races like the Gaels who loiter so much in their past ...': *ibid.*, 5.

Barisdale or the treacherous MacShimi, Simon Lord Lovat, symbol of what Munro sees as the endless betrayals and treacheries of the Northern clans.

Significantly, Munro did not stay long in Inveraray. At eighteen he was in Glasgow, shortly to begin an illustrious career in journalism which would see him become Scotland's outstanding newspaper editor and critic, spanning the worlds of industry and commerce as well as the arts, with *The Glasgow Evening News*. (The bulk of Munro's huge body of journalism has never been published in book form, although his close friend, the novelist George Blake, published two collections, *The Brave Days* (1931) and *The Looker-On* (1933) showing the richness and range of his commentaries on the new twentieth-century Scotland.)⁹ Munro never returned to live in Inveraray, but moved restlessly around Glasgow, Eaglesham, Gourrock and Helensburgh, his choice of homes revealing an underlying desire to accommodate both Highlands and Lowlands. The maps which Munro chose to accompany two late works, his study of *The Clyde* (1907) and the Highland novel *The New Road* (1914) reflect Munro's interlocking and overlapping territories; the reader who surveys their coverage of territory begins to understand how this writer, vastly influential in his time, was helping to usher in a new phase in Scottish cultural awareness, where Lowland perceptions of the Highlands as 'the other', the wild zone beyond the Clyde and the barrier mountains of Perthshire, begin to disintegrate, with the Scottish regions becoming, in popular consciousness and in the minds of Renaissance writers, intertwined and part of an emerging meta-identity for Scotland. After the Great War others like MacDiarmid followed, if they did not always acknowledge, Munro's inspiration (C. M. Grieve's choice of pseudonym is, after all, homage

⁹As 'Mr Incognito', for the last three years of his life (1927–1930) Munro produced a series of 'Random Reminiscences' for Glasgow's *The Daily Mail and Record*. A selection by George Blake appeared as *The Brave Days: A Chronicle From the North* (Edinburgh 1931). Blake's second selection, from Munro's huge number of articles for *The Glasgow Evening News*, spanning almost forty years' contributions, appeared as *The Looker-On* (Edinburgh 1933).

to the master-tribe of Diarmid, Munro's oldest, pre-Clan Campbell forebears, suggesting an underlying ideological link). The work of Neil Gunn, Lewis Grassie Gibbon, Eric Linklater and Naomi Mitchison would follow Munro in developing a synthesis of Highland and Lowland folk tradition, legend and myth.

Munro is profoundly important for this later reorientation. Hostile to the Kailyard and Celtic Twilight movements from the beginning, his first desire was to interpret the Highlands from the inside, since he felt that all previous literary evocations had been Lowland distortions. The result was the pioneering collection of short stories, *The Lost Pibroch* of 1896, published in the same year as Barrie's satire on Scotland's repression of imagination and art, *Sentimental Tommy*, and in the period of the most ferocious of anti-kailyarders—and anti-Scots! —of the time, John Davidson, whose fiction and poetry marks another savage break with a romanticised past. Subtly exploiting and parodying the nostalgic self-indulgence and pseudo-Celtic mannerisms of 'Fiona Macleod', these poetic stories are essentially tragic, elegiac, and satiric. They draw in style from the great collections of oral tradition by J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (1860–2) but they consciously underweave a dark sub-text which can easily be missed given the strength of their narratives, their cruel and often shocking twists of fate, and their seemingly sincere but deceptively mannered Celticism. The title story tells of a haunting and ancient pipe tune which must not be played. If it is played—and of course it is played, such is the vanity of the rival pipers—a blight will descend on the dear green places of the Highlands, and villages will lose their young men to emigration and war, following a nameless yearning. Munro never explicitly answers the implied question as to why an ancient pipe tune played by a blind piper should contain a curse of such power; but there is already the suggestion that something dark in the Gaelic inheritance, a 'feyness' or fatedness, has entered Highland culture, together with an excessive vanity and jealousy of loyalties which forces endless and unnecessary challenges of blood and vendetta. Story after story has this sly sub-text. A jealous second wife

slashes the piping hand of her stepson, who threatens to outplay his father, a son kills his unknown father as a result of a pointless, long-drawn blood feud, jealous brothers drive a French lover from their enchanted sister, and again and again tragedy results when neighbouring communities and clans are mutually distrustful and ready to find the insult that leads to bloodshed. Romance is a deceit, the traditional artist an anachronism—blind, crippled, or pushed outside the community to wander. The last pibroch has been played.

Three stories outstandingly represent Munro's attack on what he felt had become the weakened heart of his Highlands; 'Boboon's Children', 'Castle Dark', and 'War'. The first tells of how John Fine Macdonald, leader of an ancient nomadic tribe, at one with season and landscape, portrayed as a kind of *ur*-Highlander, is 'civilised' by the Campbell Captain of Inveraray. The Captain is seen as a pseudo-father who aims to destroy these original and natural Highlanders, with his clanship enclosure of their ancient and nomadic simplicity of spirit. Boboon hears his tribe calling at night to him from outside the castle walls, and eventually succumbs to their outlaw temptations of salmon and deer and freedom—but his daughter dies as the Captain's prisoner-wife. 'Castle Dark' is even more revealing of Munro's sense that something ancient and good in Highland tradition has been corrupted by dominance of ideas of castle power and male assertions of the values of war. In this, the closing story of the collection, a fable of Highland history and culture, the blind piper, Paruig Dall—he whose piping of the legendary Lost Pibroch sent Highlanders wandering the earth, and whose story opened the volume—begins with his description of Castle Dark, which seems to be an archetype of all great Highland houses and clans. 'Once upon a time', Paruig tells us, 'Castle Dark was a place of gentility and stirring days ... now it is like a deer's skull in Wood Mamore, empty, eyeless, sounding to the whistling wind, but blackened instead of bleached in the threshing rains'.¹⁰ To find this quintessential castle of all the Highlands, the traveller must journey twice on the Blue

¹⁰Neil Munro, 'Castle Dark', *The Lost Pibroch* (Edinburgh 1896), 261.

Barge, the *birlinn ghorm*, the galley of Fairy Lorn; thus Munro deepens the idea that the journey is one of spirit and imagination rather than actuality. Paruig tells us how an Adventurer made the two trips; Munro, behind him, setting out his dark three-stage account of Highland declension. On his first trip:¹¹

When Adventurer reached the bridge, it was before the time of war, and the country from end to end sat quiet, free, and honest. Our folks lived the clean out-by life of shepherds and early risers. Round these hills the woods—the big green woods—were trembling with bird and beast, and the two glens were crowded with warm homes, —every door open, and the cattle untethered on the hill. Summer found the folks like ourselves here, far up on sappy levels among the hills, but their sheilings more their own than ours are, with never a reiver nor a broken clan in all the land. Good stout roads and dry went down the passes to Castle Dark from all airts of Albainn—roads for knight and horse, but free and safe for the gentlest girl ever so lonely. By sea came gabberts of far France with wine and drink; by land the carriers brought rich cloths, spices and Italian swords ...

But the harmony of these ancient days is not to last. Even as Adventurer marvels at the tranquillity and beauty of the land, he realises how the Highlands are changing, as he overhears the young chief of Castle Dark taking farewell of his lover. Echoing the first story of the volume, he tells her, 'I am for the road tomorrow'. 'For yon silly cause again?' she sighs:¹²

'For the old cause', said he; 'my father's, my dead brother's, my clan's, ours for a hundred years. Do not lightly the cause, my dear; it may be your children's yet'.

And, with the false promises of 'War', the chief goes off to the endless clan feuds, battles, and wars so beloved of romance, but which Munro sees as terminally destructive for his Highlands. The second trip on the Blue Barge reveals the extent of the tragedy.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 266–7.

¹² *Ibid.*, 270–1.

"Twas a summer's end when he [Adventurer] went on the next jaunt, a hot night and hung with dripping stars. The loch crawled in from a black waste of sorrow and strange hills ... hissing among the wreck ...'.¹³

Suddenly, with savage reversal, it is winter, despite Paruig's beginning the jaunt with summer. 'Winter I said, and winter it was'—and morning too, emphasizes Paruig, deliberately contradicting himself to emphasize that the times are out of joint.¹⁴

It was the middle and bloodiest time of all our wars. The glens behind were harried, and their cattle were bellowing in strange fields. Widows grat on the brae-sides and starved their bairns for the bere and oat that were burned. But Adventurer found a castle full of company, the rich scum of water-side lairds and Lowland gentry, dicing and drinking in the best hall of Castle Dark. Their lands were black, their homes levelled, or their way out of the country—if they were Lowland—was barred by jealous clans ...

Munro's nightmare picture of what Argyll and the Highlands have become after internecine wars and Jacobite rebellions is prolonged, with drunken card-playing and slumbering wrecks of revellers littering the castle. The extent of degradation is represented in the self-hatred of George Mor, a mercenary famous, 'namely for women and wine and gentlemanly sword-play'.¹⁵ That 'gentlemanly' is deeply ironic; George Mor is one of the first of a long line of 'Jaunty Jocks' and John Splendids, raffish adventurers twisted by Highland feud and war-culture into a deformation of older Highland values. The story's climax comes with the return of Castle Dark's young chief, embittered and yet again disillusioned to find that George Mor would appear to have taken his place with his lady. Whether he has or not is left open; they fight, and George Mor is killed. The story—and the collection—ends as it began, with desolation, the end of

¹³*Ibid.*, 273.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 275–6.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 276.

Castle Dark, the young chief yet again for the road that leads to the furthest ends of the world.

Munro's satiric vision of his Highlands can be seen developing in these tales. Broadly he sees Highland culture and history as existing in three distinct periods—firstly, a golden age (anticipating key ideas of the later writers such as Gunn, Gibbon, and Muir); secondly, the descent into clan rivalry and bloodthirsty wars of so-called honour; and thirdly, an inevitable move of Highlanders out into the big world of trade and commerce, yet too often as exiles or mercenaries, and leaving behind the nostalgic wasteland of half-pay retired soldiers and empty boasters mulling over their war memories, so vividly represented in the novel *Gilian the Dreamer*. Increasingly Munro's work identifies the archetypal Highlander as unreliable, deceitful and flattering, too often a braggart who represents the tragic flaw at the heart of the degeneration of a once-noble clanship: clan feuding and approved despoliation, a social system which finds its ultimate value in stealing cattle and killing women and children in the name of tribal honour, and in which the traditional equality of blood kinship (found with Boboon and his children) has been replaced by the hierarchical claims of the clan chief in his new and anglicised guise of Marquis or Earl or Duke.

Munro was never more scathing about this male-dominated and hierarchical swaggering than in 'War', one of the starkest and most effective of his many tragedies. Rob Donn follows Duke John to Culloden and the boastful, satisfied killing of fellow-Highlanders, leaving his pregnant wife with no money, but with pretentious promises of his returning glory. Months pass; the restless soldier squanders the money he took from his wife; gluttoned with killing, he returns just as his wife, her own milk long dry, in last extremity of famine drawing off blood from her cow for her baby, hears the child's death-cry. The closing passages, with their evocation of the swagger of the Campbells as they boast of their defeat of Charles at Culloden, convey the depth of Munro's hatred and disgust at warlike male posturing, as Rob Donn returns home with the cockade of the

seventh man he has killed as a gift for the child he has left to starvation and death:¹⁶

... Rob Donn left the company as it passed near his own door.
 'Faith, 'tis a poor enough home-coming, without wife or bairn to
 meet one', said he as he pushed in the door.
 'Wife! Wife!' he cried ben among the peat-reek, 'there's never a stot,
 but here's the cockade for the little one!'

Here, with George Mor of 'Castle Dark', is the prototype for the Jaunty Jocks, the 'John Heilanmen'—and ultimately the Campbell chieftains themselves, who are merely their swaggering clan unreliaables writ large. Munro will play with endless cunning with many variations of the type—and the name—of Highland Jock. A kindlier and later mood—yet, I will argue, still parodic and satiric—will see Munro reshape them into the crew of *The Vital Spark*, slipping in and out of Highland and Lowland ports with all the unreliability and shiftiness of their forebears, generally avoiding any claims of duty and responsibility, and covering their tracks with the relics of older self-inflating importance. But in 1898, with *John Splendid*, Munro was out to change Lowland perceptions of the Highlands with a subtle but deadly undermining of the House of Argyll from within.

For this is the strangest of historical romances—indeed, it is closer to the anti-romance of Lowlander James Hogg in his *Tales of the Wars of Montrose*, and particularly the parody of historical romance of *An Edinburgh Bailie* (1835). The two 'heroes', ex-soldiers of European fortune John McIver (John Splendid, so called because of his vain but charismatic demeanour) and 'sobersides' Colin Elrigmore, are amongst the Marquis of Argyll's right-hand men. The events are set amidst Montrose-Macdonald's ravaging of Argyllshire in 1644, and the consequent pursuit of Montrose by Argyll, in which the hunted became the hunter. After his legendary mountain march Montrose surprised and destroyed Argyll's army at Inverlochy,

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 241–2.

and—for the second time—Argyll fled from him, leaving his men to death and disgrace.

Argyll's double shame hangs over the book; and virtually all the narrative shares this overall feeling. For John and Colin achieve nothing for their side, apart from saving their own and some of their friends' skins. As far as battle goes, they are strangely ineffective, getting caught by their enemies as they carelessly dispute Highland poetry with the cranky Bard of Keppoch, John Lom Macdonald, before the battle of Inverlochry. They are on the run constantly, slouching like thieves, begging from poor women in lonely cottages, lost on Rannoch Moor, inglorious in their company and their cause. The reader should realise that this is a parodic extension of Scott's ambiguous presentation of complex protagonists such as Edward Waverley or Redgauntlet, as well as of Stevenson's *Kidnapped*, with its apparently similar but essentially different Breck-Balfour relationship. The tradition in the Scottish novel of sly use of dramatic monologue, from the work of Galt and Hogg down to *The Master of Ballantrae*, in which the suspect teller of the tale reveals more about his limitations than he knows, is maintained here in Colin Elrimore's obtuse unawareness throughout the novel that his idolised Betty, the Provost's daughter, loves, and is being wooed by, his apparent boon companion John Splendid. Little is as it claims to be in this novel: Highland honour is exposed as sham bragging, shallow loyalty, and male egocentricity, as John wheedles, struts, and manipulates up to the edge of murder, with Colin his rather dull Sancho Panza.

These nasty little wars of Lorn, with their rival leaders Montrose and Argyll seen as hardly in control of their armies, are strangely detached from what is going on in the bigger British world. Munro deliberately leaves out any account of what Argyll is up to in the bigger world, and nothing of how he plays his much greater game with Covenanters, King Charles, and Westminster parliamentarians. The Highlanders are not interested in the larger picture, and Munro thus shows their limited and disconnected mindset. And nowhere is Munro's point about reductive Highland insularity made more clear

than in the treatment by his Campbell adherents of Archibald the Grim, Gillespie Gruamach, Marquis of Argyll. Their failure to understand his new-world vision, and their insistence on fawning upon his least wish, is summed up in his relationship with John Splendid. Here is the key to Munro's psychological analysis of the destructive mindset of Gaeldom, and it is a critical assessment the more trenchant because it comes from within, from the heart of Inveraray—or at least from an Inveraray exile moved by love and profound disillusion.

Argyll can be read as representing the beginning of the third phase of Highland development as predicted and half-welcomed, half-deplored by Munro; namely, that move away from clan identification and ethos to acceptance of the values of a bigger world. Argyll plays his part—whatever his failings—in this bigger world; it will lead him to execution in Edinburgh ten years after Montrose. John Splendid will have none of Argyll's bookish and civilising tendencies—freedom to war, at home against Macdonalds or the Atholl men, or abroad as mercenary, never judging the morality of the cause, is John the Hielanman's way, as long as he cuts a good figure, and fair speech is given to friends. As the novel develops, Munro shows the Lowlands changing Inveraray. The new shopkeepers, the vessels from Glasgow and Ayr, and the new 'English' church with its dour minister Gordon seem to sleepy Colin at first an intrusion, but by the end of the book he accepts the need for Lowland influence and change, and even decides—to Splendid's discomfiture—that the most courageous soldier and the best man throughout the sorry wars of Lorn has been the minister Gordon, the dour and inflexible Lowlander, the only man to speak plain and honest, without Highland flattery and face-saving and boasting—especially to Argyll. The most impressive part of this strange treatment of what could so easily be the subject for romance lies at the end, when Argyll lies sick in his castle after Inverlochy. John Splendid and Argyll's leaders had at the beginning advised him to quit Inveraray—and then again Inverlochy—to lead the clan another day. Their subservient and face-saving advice has brought

about the spiritual demoralisation of the Campbells. Now at last Argyll begs his cousin John McIver to speak true and to tell him what he thinks of his chief, maintaining that he has been the victim of the smooth-tongued 'Highland liar'. And at last John seems to speak out honestly—although even now it will appear afterwards that his apparent final frankness has been calculated roleplaying, and his dramatic declaration to abandon Argyll for European wars was for effect only:¹⁷

'What do I think?' echoed McIver. 'Well, now—'
 'On your honour now', cried Argile, clutching him by the shoulder. At this McIver's countenance changed: he threw off his soft complacency, and cruelty and temper stiffened his jaw.
 'I'll soon give you that, my Lord of Argile', said he. 'I can lie like a Dutch major for convenience sake, but put me on honour and you'll get the truth if it cost me my life. Purgatory's your portion, Argile, for a Sunday's work that makes our name a mock today across the envious world. Take to your books and your preachers, sir—you're for the cloister and not for the field: and if I live a hundred years, I'll deny I went with you to Inverlochy ... Tomorrow the old big wars for me ... and I'll find no swithering captains among the Cavaliers in France'.

This is a subtle novel, and a superficial reading will miss the fact that both Argyll and McIver are being satirised, the one for accepting corrupt and hierarchical flattery, the other for giving it, and failing to see that the day of the old barbaric Highlands is over. Yet even in McIver's retraction we realise that he is equivocating; as he admits to Elrigrmore, 'I could scarcely say myself when a passion of mine is real or fancied'; while Elrigrmore, while still seeing him as his friend, can describe him in these closing stages as 'a most wicked, cunning, cruel fellow'. Such ambivalences and qualifications are Munro's way of expressing his love and hate for the way the essential early and natural goodness of Highland culture has been warped into time-serving deceit and arrogance. John must not be

¹⁷Neil Munro, *John Splendid* (Edinburgh 1898), 279–80.

read solely as Highland deceiver; he has many of the old virtues—the skills of a scout, the loyalty to immediate comrades, an instinctive protectiveness towards women and children. He may deceive Colin Elrigmore in love, but he relinquishes his chances for love to the younger man, and does indeed go off to Europe—leaving as the end of the novel the realisation by Betty that she has lost the man she really loves through misunderstanding, and the possible realisation—for he *is* dense!—by Colin that the woman he will marry will always love another—hardly the conventional romantic finale!

If *John Splendid* is important as Munro's fusion and summation into the two main figures of John Splendid and Argyll of all he deprecates and values in a period of Highland culture which has lost its way, then his next novel, *Gilian the Dreamer* (1899) is its counterpart, an assessment of the nineteenth-century Highlands at the tail-end of the Napoleonic wars, when innumerable half-pay colonels ('Cornals' in Inveraray) and major-generals returned from Spain and Europe to rot in Inveraray and the small Highland towns, in a dwam of bloody and glorious memories of the foreign wars of Empire. It is the era of an even more illustrious and by now remote London grandee Duke John, McCailein Mòr, and these washed-up soldiers are the heirs of John Splendid. Munro mercilessly anatomizes them, and their repressive and malign influence on a burgh struggling to enter modernity. Casual reading will miss the deadliness of Munro's satire on these pensioned-off relics, boorish to their women, utterly self-centred, and nurturing old feuds. Munro was never more acidic than in his picture of the three Campbells of Keil: the old general Dugald, virtually dead apart from his memories in his dull room in a dark tenement; his brothers, Cornal John and the bull-necked Paymaster Captain John Campbell, another version of Jaunty Jock, and perhaps the least attractive. His is a portrayal of colossal male egotism which was to be developed in Douglas Brown's Ayrshire merchant-tyrant Gourlay in *The House With the Green Shutters* two years later, and in the Highland merchant-tyrant Gillespie in Hay's novel of that name of 1914, set in Tarbert. Munro's

half-pay officers are in varying degrees bullies, philistines and anachronisms, unquestioning killers for empire. Munro leaves some of them—like the decent general, John Turner—respectability and a place to fulfil in the world; but in the main this town has become a place of drunken ex-soldiers roistering in its taverns while women do the work.

But Munro has deeper issues to fathom—and now he articulates a crucial Scottish predicament, which illustrates how he transcends Highland limitations to speak, like Neil Gunn after him, for Scottish culture and its failings. Gilian—the name a mocking echo of Gilian-of-the-Axe, one of Munro's Celtic folk heroes—is a fatherless boy of twelve whose grandmother has died. From the start we realise he is an unusual and perhaps not entirely healthy child; utterly alone at her death in Ladyfield, a small farm outside Inveraray, he plays on his imagination as to how he will tell his sad news in the town – suddenly, for maximum impact? Leading up slowly, for other, more complex effect? Gilian plays with his grief, genuine enough, but dearer still to him for its imaginative and emotional effects. This is fine natural awareness and sensibility gone wrong through marginalisation.

For this boy is in his way a genius, with an imagination which cannot be fulfilled in this repressive burgh, with its lack of any aesthetic nourishment. Munro is in fact asking the question Scott posed in *Waverley* in 1814, and posed again in 1896 by Stevenson in his portrayal of hyper-sensitive Archie Weir of Hermiston, and yet again in the same year—and just three years before *Gilian*—by James Barrie in his study of imaginative genius in an equally repressive environment, in *Sentimental Tommy*. Clearly this recurrent focus on socially thwarted Scottish creativity stems from a recurrent and highly significant preoccupation of serious Scottish writers, for it is also central to George Douglas Brown's portrait of the excessively sensitive and imaginative John Gourlay junior in his novel of repressive small town life, as it is in MacDougall Hay's *Gillespie* thirteen years later, in his evocation of the disturbed mind of young

Eochan Strang, sensitive to his environment and family pressures to the point of his destruction.

What is the question? It is simply this; what happens to creative genius in a culture and country which cannot and will not provide nourishment for it? And the answer, from all these writers—and Eric Linklater, Robin Jenkins and Iain Crichton Smith thereafter, to name but a few of the major writers who later took up the same theme—is that creative imagination becomes sick when its community denies it, forcing it inward into uncertain roleplaying to the point where it is an irrelevance, even a danger to its community and society.

It is important to realise that this novel is not just about the loss of ancient bardic involvement in Highland community. Munro's perception of the Highlands is beginning to merge with a more general perception of the overall problems of Scottish culture, including problems of Anglicisation, neglect of native language and genius, and a hardening of philistine attitudes towards local talent and subject-matter. (The problem will remain at the forefront of Scottish culture, whether urban or rural, until the seventies, as shown in novels like Archie Hind's *The Dear Green Place* (1966) and Iain Crichton Smith's *Consider the Lilies* (1968)—one set in Glasgow, the other set in Strathnaver, but both deploring the repression of the creative imagination in a repressive society.) And nowhere in Scottish literature is re-assessment more needed than in this area in which the treatment of this central theme of Scottish fiction through ironic parody brings together such a mixture of writers too readily labelled as 'kailyard' or 'romantic escapist' or 'over-blackly realist'.

Gilian isn't a John Splendid. Indeed, he's closer to Munro himself, and this novel is arguably a working out of Munro's own troubled awareness of Campbell fatherhood as well as his recognition that Inveraray could never be a complete home to him. We never learn who Gilian's father is; is it the Paymaster, who owns Ladyfield, where Gilian's mother worked? Why else does he assume responsibility for the boy? Gilian is a misfit who will fail the

assessment of all but the few who see his buried qualities. To his adoptive Campbells he is a playacting fool; to his contemporaries at school a wild and unpredictable solitary; to his friend Nan, merely a foil to her love interests elsewhere. Yet again Munro introduces parody of the conventional love narrative of romance, as Gilian woos Nan Turner—only to lose her to the genuine boy of action, young Islay Campbell, who saves her from shipwreck when, like the wayward hero of Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* (1900), he is frozen at the moment of truth into thinking too precisely on the event. Imagination is divorced from action, argues Munro, seeing Gilian's predicament as symptomatic of a sickness at the heart of Highland culture. (Intriguingly Munro knew and liked Conrad, having met him in Glasgow in 1899, when Conrad was seeking a ship's command; one can only speculate as to whether they shared thoughts on their mutual preoccupation with the dangers of disablingly excessive imagination.) Casual reading will miss the parody of romance, as Gilian, utterly at home with birds, animals and all nature, finds himself trapped between what Munro portrays as the ancient and natural Highland landscape and its traditions—the world of 'Boboon's Children'—and this ugly, contradictory and deeply unsatisfying modern world which has no respect for Art, whether it be legendary tale or traditional song—a Highland world, but now very like its Lowland counterpart, in its absorption into empire and Britain.

A chapter such as this cannot do justice to the entire and neglected output of this writer. Other Highland—and island—novels, such as *Doom Castle* (1901) and *Children of Tempest* (1903) followed, together with Lowland work like the *Shoes of Fortune* (1901) and, of course, the *Para Handy*, *Jimmy Swan* and *Erichie* stories running from 1904 into the twenties. Always the dark undercurrents remained, together with the sense of a writer seeking new, parodic ways of handling old romances or humorous yet deceptively realistic stories of the new, urban Scotland. And always the John Splendid figure recurs, in different guises—as the magnificent villain Sim McTaggart, Argyll's factor, in *Doom Castle*, a

spy on the Jacobites in France who has fled home from his betrayals, but a charmer whose flute-playing hypnotises the reader throughout the novel into disbelief that he can be such an evil sham. In *The Shoes of Fortune*, Lowlander Paul Greig, exiled from Scotland, falls in with Highland intrigue in France with Prince Charles and Clementina Walkinshaw. He discovers that the lady is formidable, if decent, while the prince—the ultimate John Splendid? —and his adherents are utterly vain and corrupt. This novel leads directly to Violet Jacob's historical deconstruction of Jacobitism in her novel *Flemington* (1911) (rediscovered and edited by Carol Anderson),¹⁸ while *Children of Tempest* helped inspire Gunn to *The Gray Coast* and *The Lost Glen* in the twenties. And then there are two experimental and highly theoretical novels set in what is virtually the modern Scotland of the turn of the century, which, if not as successful as these others, break entirely new ground in their speculations regarding future Highland development. *The Daft Days* (1907) shocks the sleepy backwater of Inveraray with a girl-version of Gilian, the thoroughly modern and irrepressible American child Bud, whose fresh thinking sweeps cobwebs out of the old town. Munro said that he loved Americans 'because they beat that stupid old King George and laughed at dynasties'; while *Fancy Farm* (1910) unsuccessfully tried to recreate a Highlander of the old natural order in the unbelievable reformer Sir Andrew Schaw—but successfully presented a picture of how New Woman may ruthlessly sweep out Highland failings and prejudice.

Munro was writing now as the successful and influential Lowland and Glasgow editor. His perspectives had greatly changed. He was now the sophisticated art critic, whose discussions of the paintings of Whistler, French impressionism and Rennie Mackintosh richly deserve republication, as do the dozen or so unpublished volumes of rich commentary on war, the changing industrial Clyde, the fascinating new technologies of the Empire exhibitions, the New Glasgow. Munro would certainly have laughed at MacDiarmid's

¹⁸Violet Jacob, *Flemington*, ed. Carol Anderson (Aberdeen 1994).

ideas that Glasgow, at any rate, needed a renaissance, since he believed that Scottish culture was already in revival, with his Glasgow and Lowland life a rich mixture of art and commerce. But for all this relocation, he was still developing his final view of the Highlands, which found articulation in 1914 in his last and greatest historical novel, *The New Road*, of what he saw as the most significant transition in Highland culture, that of the period between the 'Fifteen and the 'Forty-five Jacobite rebellions, when Wade's roads would drain away what he now clearly saw as the poison at the heart of the Highlands.

At the same time he was also trying out other ways of expressing this sense of the flawed Highland inheritance. Osborne and Armstrong's recent and richly annotated editions of Munro's later comic stories of Para Handy and the crew of *The Vital Spark* suggest that we have not always realised the depth of social and satiric comment in Munro's presentation of his Highland sailors.¹⁹ I would argue that Munro's aims here are only partially comic and entertaining, and that these stories, albeit in an apparently more light-hearted way, are nevertheless critical, derogatory and ironic portrayals which continue into the modern period Munro's portrayal of Highland cultural malaise. These anachronistic misfits—and especially the charismatic but utterly selfish, manipulative, and amoral Hurricane Jack—are the heirs of John Splendid, latter-day Jaunty Jocks who cannot adapt to modern realities. Munro himself grew somewhat disgusted with their immense popularity; and while he may simply have felt fed up and perhaps ashamed of prolonging their shelf-life, it may be also that he felt his stories had been misread. The hilarity of Para's hilarious escapades should not blind us to two deeper, if typically ambivalent messages. The first of these sub-texts is that the crew are a feckless, squabbling lot, who will

¹⁹Neil Munro, *Para Handy: the collected stories from 'The Vital Spark', 'In Highland harbours with Para Handy', and 'Hurricane Jack of the Vital Spark', with eighteen previously uncollected stories*, edd. Brian. D. Osborne and Ronald Armstrong (Edinburgh 1992). See also Osborne and Armstrong's *Ermie and Jimmie Swan: with fifty-nine previously uncollected stories* (Edinburgh 1993).

neither work nor want, who slip in and out of Highland and Lowland harbours with equal disrespect, who would literally sell each other down the river with the exception of Sunny Jim, whose presence in the stories was cut short with his being replaced by the most dubious and clay-footed Jaunty Jock of them all, the idol of the crew of *The Vital Spark*, the arch-schemer Hurricane Jack. Readers could well revisit his exploits; they will discover the most manipulative and ruthlessly selfish of all Munro's Highlanders, cunningly disguised by Munro through the adulation of the crew as a colourful scamp.

The second sub-text is less satirically damaging—and here we may invoke the current literary fashion for citing Michel Bahktin as a source of possible revaluation of the subversive, the lowlife and the bawdily irreverent in our literature from the Makars to Ramsay, Fergusson, and the Jolly Beggars of Burns. Are the crew not the descendants of Burns' motley misfits, as they mock the pretentious, refuse to be located in any system, and generally ape their betters with their parodic and pompous philosophising? In any event, they are the heirs of the mixed qualities of John Splendid; and Munro's deceptively genial relocation of them into a territory neither sea nor land, neither ocean nor river, neither Highland or Lowland, marks their author's revisioning of Scottish literature and culture as having become a single entity, where no part of the whole can any longer claim separate vitality, and where the Highlands are seen as having to accept this inevitable commercial and cultural change.

All of Munro's development to this point goes into his last and greatest historical novel, clearly separated from the earlier Highland work by ten years. *The New Road* is his masterpiece, with a detached irony which runs alongside a more generous and affectionate recognition of a lingering but doomed survival of that original and natural spirit of the Highlands. This survival is exemplified in his vivid and affirmative picture of Ninian MacGregor Campbell, who takes his place between Scott's Rob Roy, and John Splendid at his best. Inveraray and the house of Argyll are now seen as a bridge between old Highlands and new Lowlands, fulfilling

Gillespie Gruamach's dream. It is a novel in the grand tradition of Scottish mythic regeneration in fiction, taking its place alongside the best of Scott, Gunn and Mitchison.

It begins in 1733. Aeneas Macmaster is a tutor in Drimdorran house to Black Sandy Duncanson, agent supreme of London, and Edinburgh-based Duke Red John. Aeneas's father Paul, who rashly went out on the Jacobite side in the little-remembered Glenshiel rising of 1719, is presumed drowned, and Black Sandy has taken over his forfeited estate. Fears are growing of another rebellion; arms are being smuggled from Holland, and the chief of Clan Fraser, the dreaded MacShimi, Simon Lord Lovat, is spinning his latest web of intrigue and self-aggrandisement in his fastness in Inverness. Against this movement into typical Highland unrest, however, is the Road; Wade's regiments are toiling without cease to drive the first-ever passage for troops and commerce through the glens.

These two counter-movements are echoed in subtle patterns of juxtaposition throughout the novel. And here the debt of Munro to Scott must be acknowledged, for Munro is once again reworking an earlier fiction – this time that most misunderstood of Scott novels, *Rob Roy*. Scott's great oppositions of past and present, disorder and order, Highland and Lowland, are reworked here to bring Scott's predictions of the triumph of order to fulfilment. The oppositions are rich. Here is the Inveraray Bailie Alan-Iain-Alain Og Macmaster, reformed Highlander, the modern Baillie Nicol Jarvie who relishes the impact that the Road will have on his wild countrymen; and, set beside him, his friend—a subtle joke here—a cousin of Rob Roy's in the form of *Iain Beachdair*, 'John the Scout', Ninian Macgregor Campbell, who can be seen almost as a Rob Roy himself, if more socially acceptable, since he is in the Duke's service as his messenger-at-arms, and since he has all Rob's cunning and natural skills. The connection with John Splendid through name is also intentional; for, if the Bailie is the future, third phase of Highland integration with the Lowlands, then Ninian is descendant of Boboon, the original captain of the children of the mist (a motif which runs

through the novel), chanter of ancient and pagan prayers and absolutely at home in wild nature.

As in Scott's novel, this pairing of opposites is symbolic. Ancient and modern will destroy the corruption which came with the clans – of MacShimi, of all the petty chieftains, and of Black Sandy, who turns out not to be serving his Duke, but to be the murderer of Aeneas' father and in league with McShimi and his treacherous chieftains. And with another unlikely pairing, Munro returns to exploit *Kidnapped* again, this time by setting Aeneas on a journey with Ninian, with two aims. Aeneas is to learn the new trading skills, while Ninian is to seek out the arms smugglers and the plotters of rebellion. The journey will finally destroy all Aeneas's romantic notions of the Highlands. He finds the apparently impressive and romantic giant Highland brigand Col Barisdale to be a hollow drum, a huge bullying bubbly-jock; he finds the merchants of Inverness haggling like fishwives over salmon and salt and pickled beef; he finds the lairds planning to cut down woods to feed their new furnaces. He vows never to wear the kilt again, and, says Munro, 'his dream dispelled of a poetic world surviving in the hills, he got malicious and secret joy from stripping every rag of false heroics from such gentry'²⁰—summarising Munro's own longer journey of highland revaluation.

At the heart of the novel lie potent symbols. On the one hand, Munro places in opposition two kinds of Highland power-broker—one, the black Highland spider, MacShimi, rotten to the core, with his kidnappings, his flattery of his fawning clansmen with the old lie of equality, his lust for total power; on the other, Duke John, accepted now as a force for improvement—but never allowed the dignity and status given to Duncan Forbes of Culloden as the real new peace-maker of the Highlands. And, most powerful symbol of all, the Road; a nightmare construction for Wade's men, threatened by winter, flood and attack by the clans, who see all too well what it spells for them. Its epic, steady movement north is brilliantly evoked

²⁰Neil Munro, *The New Road* (Edinburgh 1914), 177.

by Munro, a vision of the future Scotland, its internal boundaries broken down. Munro has regrets. Ninian will lament the loss of open landscape and freedom, and the decline of the Gael's sinewy athleticism—but, as in Scott's ambivalent treatments of Scottish history, his reason sees these losses as secondary to necessary progress and national integration.

The treatment of boundaries is one of the most intriguing features of this novel. Aeneas may at times feel Inveraray to be a Gaelic-speaking, Highland place; but frequently its status as a gateway to the Lowlands is emphasized, and the roads south from it are main routes, stripped to the rock by passing commerce. Conversely, as Aeneas and Ninian move north, they encounter boundaries as real to them as any separating Inveraray from the Lowlands. Several times Ninian will indicate to Aeneas that they are crossing another boundary—at Glenorchy, at Kingshouse near Glencoe and Rannoch Moor, and—most of all—as they approach Inverness, where Ninian warns Aeneas of 'The Wicked Bounds'—the boundaries of MacShimi's power. Isn't Munro making a fundamental point? That boundaries aren't fixed in nature, but man-made? That Highland-Lowland separations mean as little as these internal Highland separations of greed and violence? Duncan Forbes, the great peace-maker in history as well as Munro's novel, should be allowed to speak for this novel. For all his even-handedness, he too is a Highlander; and 'half-mocking and half-sad', he sums up the great changes that Wade's new roads will make. Sympathising with Ninian's regrets for the passing of the best of the old Highlands, he surely speaks for Munro's ambivalent mixture of criticism and love of his original country and culture:²¹

The hearts of all of us are sometimes in the wilds. It's not so very long since we left them. But the end of all that sort of thing's at hand. The man who's going to put an end to it—to you, and Lovat, and to me—yes, yes, to me! or the like of me, half fond of plot and strife and savagery, is Wade ... Ye saw the Road? That Road's the

²¹ *Ibid.*, 215–16.

end of us! The Romans didna manage it; Edward didna manage it; But there it is at last, through to our vitals, and it's up wi' the ell-wand, down the sword! ... It may seem a queer thing for a law officer of the Crown to say, Mr Campbell, but I never was greatly taken wi' the ell-wand, and man, I liked the sword!

Nothing Munro wrote after this is as good. He had made his point about the reconciliation of two Scotlands, and while he continues to write short stories based on his two beloved territories, north and south of the Clyde, he was by now more than anything else the war correspondent, the editor, the commentator on Scotland as a whole, who has said goodbye to his ancient, pre-clan Highlands. The rest was for the Scottish Renaissance to take up from him, and Sorley MacLean, Gunn, MacColla, Macpherson (and Linklater for the non-Gaelic Orkneys) continued his deconstructions. Crichton Smith, MacCaig (and Mackay Brown with the Orkneys), and so many later twentieth century writers from Naomi Mitchison to Jessie Kesson modified romantic perceptions to the point of recognition of the paradoxical relationship in Highland (and Island) territories with their underlying tragedies, in which ironic awareness of cultural disintegration accompanies profound love of landscape and tradition. The process continues: in Lewis and the Western Isles, in the work of writers like James Shaw Grant, Calum Macdonald and Anne McLeod; in Orkney, Shetland and the Northern Isles, in the work of writers like John Graham, Gregor Lamb and Margaret Elphinstone.²² Most recently some of the more

²²A selection from some of the newer fiction on the Highlands and Islands includes, for the Hebrides, Iain Crichton Smith, *Consider the Lilies* (London 1968), and many other novels, stories, and poems; James Shaw Grant, *Their children will see, and other stories* (London 1979); Charles McLeod, *Devil in the Wind* (Edinburgh 1976); Norman Macdonald, *Calum Tod* (Inverness 1976) and *Portrona* (Edinburgh 2000); Anne McLeod, *The Dark Ship* (Glasgow 2000); for Orkney, Shetland and the Northern Isles, George Mackay Brown, *Greenvoe* (London 1972), and many other novels, stories and poems; John Graham, *Shadowed Valley* and *Strife in the Valley* (Lerwick 1987, 1992); Gregor Lamb, *Langskaill* (Byrgisey 1998); and Margaret Elphinstone, *Islanders* (Edinburgh 1994) and *The Sea Road* (Edinburgh 2000). The dubious effects of Highland modernisation are satirised in the work of writers like Lorn MacIntyre,

bizarre effects of modernisation of the Highlands have been anatomised in the work of writers like Alan Warner, Duncan McLean, and Bess Ross. Criticism, whether through fiction or non-fiction, has however not yet recognised the crucial role of Neil Munro in the beginnings of radical revisioning of both Lowland and Highland perceptions of Highland society and culture, a revisioning which has enabled contemporary perception to see clearly the complex and often sinister reasons for the decline of an ancient people, their language, and their ways of life.²³

Cruel in the Shadow and *The Blind Bend* (London 1979, 1981); and *Empty Footsteps: from the chronicles of Invernevis* (Duns 1996); Alan Warner, *Morven Caller, These Demented Lands, The Sopranos* (London 1995, 1997, 1998); Duncan McLean, *Blackden* (London 1994), and *Bunkerman* (London 1995); and Bess Ross, *A Bit of Crack and Car Culture, Those Other Times, Dangerous Gifts* (Nairn 1990, 1991, 1994), and *Strath* (Edinburgh 1997).

²³Editions of Munro's novels have recently been appearing from B & W Publishing; they include *John Splendid* (1994), *The New Road* (1994) and *Doom Castle* (1996), all with introductions by Brian Osborne, and *Gilian the Dreamer* (2000), with an introduction by Douglas Gifford.

**Poverty, Protest and Politics:
Perceptions of the Scottish Highlands in the 1880s**

EWEN A. CAMERON

Introduction

Cultural and political organisation in the Scottish Highlands in the 1880s ensured that perceptions of the region were generated from within to a greater extent than in earlier decades of the nineteenth century. The Gaelic Society of Inverness, formed in 1871, and the Highland Land Law Reform Associations, founded in 1882 and 1883—which evolved into the Highland Land League in 1886—played a leading part in this process. Although the historian of these organisations has argued that they have ‘some claim to the title of the first mass political party in Britain’, he also goes on to make the salient point that they were ‘clearly organised from above and outwith the crofting community’.¹ The objectives of those ‘above and outwith’ have to be considered carefully: they sought to ensure that the face which the Highlands presented to the wider world was acceptable in their terms.

Newspapers, such as John Murdoch’s *Highlander* in the 1870s, Alexander Mackenzie’s *Scottish Highlander* from 1885, and Duncan Cameron’s *Oban Times* from the early 1880s, also played an important part. The *Celtic Magazine* published in Inverness by Alexander Mackenzie from late 1875 was also an important voice in the cause of the Highlander. It was, however, an ambiguous voice, with a wider range of views contained in its pages than those seen, for example, in the *Highlander*. Organs such as the *Scotsman*, the *Glasgow Herald*, and the *Times* in London presented alternative views which were more critical of the actions of the crofters in this decade. Even within the Highlands, titles such as the *Inverness Courier* (which had absorbed the more radical *Inverness Advertiser*

¹James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh 1976), 154.

in 1885) and the new Tory paper, the *Northern Chronicle*, begun in 1881, were fairly forthright in their condemnation of the assertiveness displayed by crofters throughout the 1880s.

There were a number of other themes in the 1880s which affected these perceptions. Some were familiar in Highland history, others more novel. A familiar theme was poverty: in the late 1870s, partly due to climatic conditions, but also due to the wider agricultural problems in that decade, stricken Highlanders were once more the object of philanthropic activity. A more novel theme in this decade was organised and politicised protest: while there had been significant outbursts of protests during the second phase of the clearances in the late 1840s and early 1850s, the Bernera Riot of 1874 and the controversy surrounding the Leckmelm evictions in 1879–80, were more potent precursors of the events in Skye in the early 1880s. A third theme, which follows on from the incidence of poverty and protest in the early 1880s, was political intervention. This took two forms: the direct intervention of the government in the establishment of the Napier Commission in 1883 and the passage of the *Crofters' Holdings (Scotland) Act* in 1886; but also the involvement of the Scottish Highlands in wider political debate than ever before. This was not only a debate within the Highlands, between landlords and crofters and their respective organisations, but also saw the Highland land issue being used both practically and symbolically in wider discourses on the nature of society in the 1880s. The land question was current throughout the British Isles and Ireland in this decade: the extension of the franchise in 1884–5 had increased the scope of political activity in rural areas throughout the United Kingdom; and the development of the labour movement and other currents of radicalism stimulated social enquiry and political rhetoric which recognised the grievances of the Highland crofters as a component of fundamental social injustice. The radical press in the 1880s, most notably the newspaper of the Social Democratic Federation, *Justice*, commented at length on conditions in the Scottish Highlands. Politicians and activists such as Joseph Chamberlain, Henry George and Michael Davitt drew the attention

of wider audiences to the land question in the Highlands. This process reached its peak in the debates on the Crofters' Bills in 1885 and 1886.

Poverty and Protest

The late 1870s was a period of severe agricultural distress across Britain, especially in the wheat-growing areas of England where foreign competition led to much reduced prices. While lowland Scottish agriculture escaped the worst of this agricultural depression, the west of Ireland experienced conditions reminiscent of the 1840s.² Conditions in the Highlands were not of this magnitude, but serious problems were encountered, both among the crofting communities of the west, and the farmers of the east and central Highlands. Interestingly, the problems of the Highlands engaged the attention of the *Scotsman* which sent a reporter to the north to investigate in December 1877. At this time there was a flurry of interest in the conditions of the Highland crofters which had been initiated by an article in the *Celtic Magazine* in October 1877. Written by Mackenzie, and entitled 'The poetry and prose of a Highland croft', it had the objective of stripping away the romantic view of life in the Highlands and presenting the realities of the situation.³ Mackenzie presented the disadvantages of the crofting system in great detail; in particular, the shortage of land available to the crofter and the difficulties of making ends meet from the agricultural produce of the croft. It was argued that the 'extension of the present croft system can only make matters infinitely worse' and concluded that the 'actual misery endured by the great majority of these poor and helpless creatures is inconceivable'.⁴ John Murdoch argued that Mackenzie had failed to enquire deeply enough into the failure of

²T. M. Devine, 'Scottish farm labour in the era of the agricultural depression, 1875–1900', in *Farm Servants and Labour in Lowland Scotland, 1770–1914*, ed. T. M. Devine (Edinburgh 1984), 243–55; Gerard P. Moran, 'Near famine: the crisis in the West of Ireland 1879–82', *Irish Studies Review* 18 (1997) 14–21.

³Alexander Mackenzie, 'The poetry and prose of a Highland croft', *Celtic Magazine* 2 (1877) 449–57.

⁴*Ibid.*, 452, 455.

the crofting system and argued that the problems had deeper structural causes and that the solution to these problems was evident:⁵

We readily admit that there are many crofts too small. But instead of doing away with the crofter system, we would go in for enlarging the small and improving the inferior. We would also keep continually before the administrators the fact that if the crofts are too small, the sheep walks and deer forests are too large. In most cases we would insist that the one class is too small because the other is too large; and it is utterly absurd, as well as injurious, and it really looks like playing into the hands of the emigration agents, and covering the offences of the evicting landlords, to argue as if there was no escape from the low estate of the crofter but emigration.

This was a classic early statement of the view which the crofters' movement was to put forward in the 1880s. The late 1870s saw a growth of interest in the fate of the crofter, but the views expressed in this debate stemmed from the interaction between internal and external perceptions of the region and its people. This becomes clear when we consider the views of the *Scotsman* 'Commissioner' in late 1877.⁶ The author travelled through the islands of Mull, Skye, Lewis and parts of the west coast of the mainland and presented his views on the crofting system. His perspective was clear from the outset: crofting was seen as a malignant agricultural system; crofters were seen as lazy and inefficient farmers and the fishing industry was insufficiently exploited as a result.⁷

The island of Lewis was singled out as the site of the worst excesses—namely rampant subdivision of holdings and importunate marriages of crofters' children who did not have the enterprise or initiative to pursue a more rewarding life outside the Highlands.⁸

⁵*Highlander*, 29 Oct. 1877.

⁶There were sixteen anonymous articles in the *Scotsman* beginning on 8 Dec. 1877 and ending on 13 Mar. 1878. It seems likely that the author of these articles was J. P. Croal, who became editor of the *Scotsman* in 1905. See *Scotsman*, 1 Aug. 1932.

⁷*Scotsman*, 8 Dec. 1877.

⁸*Scotsman*, 2, 5, 9, 12, 23 Jan. 1878.

Other evils included a deplorable standard of housing, especially the cohabitation of livestock and people.⁹ While the articles purported to be the results of an objective and authoritative fact-finding mission, a political perspective emerges in those which deal with the mainland. In particular, the notion of deer forests encroaching on the land of crofters is explicitly rejected.¹⁰

Whilst these views were not new—indeed, the *Scotsman* commissioner explicitly echoed many of the prescriptions of Sir John MacNeill in his Report of 1851—the reaction to them was novel. John Murdoch described them as ‘undisguised prejudices against the Celt’ but was strongly of the opinion that these should not be allowed to ‘determine the current of public opinion or the shape of future legislation on the land question’. Murdoch echoed the theme of interaction between the external perception and insiders’ ‘reality’:¹¹

All that has been written or spoken on this question is preliminary; and most of it has been said or written by what we may call outsiders. The feelings, and views of the crofters themselves have found but little expression as yet; and before an outsider prescribes for them, as is commonly done, they should be consulted in the matter.

Thus, not only were the ideas of the *Scotsman* commissioner countered in the Highland press, but, along with other activity, the response to them was seen as an opportunity for the crofters to present their own point of view on the land question.

It has been argued that during the 1850s in the pages of, among others, the *Glasgow Argus*, *The Witness*, and the *Inverness Advertiser*, a ‘sympathetic’ response to the plight of the Highlander can be discerned.¹² The views of John Murdoch, however, transcend

⁹*Scotsman*, 5 Jan. 1878.

¹⁰*Scotsman*, 30 Jan. 1878.

¹¹*Highlander*, 15 Dec. 1877.

¹²K. Fenyő, *Contempt, Sympathy and Romance: Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands and the Clearances during the Famine Years, 1845–55* (East Linton 2000), 99–159.

these earlier perspectives in his encouragement to assertiveness and political action. The environment of the later period was also very different with the currency of the Irish land war and the election of a land reforming Liberal government in 1880.

The preferred method of elucidating Highland public opinion was through a Royal Commission, and in the late 1870s demands for the appointment of such a body began to be made in a concerted fashion. A number of the meetings of the Gaelic Society of Inverness in November and December 1877 were devoted to discussion of the crofting system, and it was agreed to petition parliament for the establishment of a Royal Commission.¹³ John Murdoch frequently gave voice to this demand, for example at a lecture delivered at the Protestant Institute in Edinburgh in December 1877.¹⁴ More than any other advocate of the cause of the crofters, Murdoch realised the obstacles which would have to be overcome before a Royal Commission could yield positive results. He was of the view that Highlanders had to be 'faithful to themselves and do the one-twentieth part of what is clearly in their power to do'.¹⁵ Further, he was in no doubt that some of the obstacles lay in the minds of the crofters themselves. He argued that one of the most important tasks of the 'Agitator' was in helping the people to develop 'their own capabilities and stirring them up to work out their own elevation'.¹⁶ Speaking of the work he and others did in advance of the Napier Commission in 1883, he remarked: 'The weightiest part of the work of these pioneers was mitigating the adverse influences of men who had for so long kept the crofters in a state of unworthy fear'.¹⁷ Murdoch was as closely associated with the crofting community as

¹³*Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 7 (1877–8) 51–2.

¹⁴*Highlander*, 29 Dec. 1877.

¹⁵*Highlander*, 5 Jan. 1878.

¹⁶Glasgow, Mitchell Library, John Murdoch MS Autobiography, vol. iv, 184. Later Murdoch recalled of his interactions with the crofters, 'my oral teaching was of great use in inspiring them with moral courage' (vol. iv, 236).

¹⁷P[arliamentary] P[apers] 1884 XXXVI, *Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the Condition of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, 3073.

any publicist of his generation, especially in the crucial years just prior to the outbreak of the Crofters' Wars. His perceptions provide good evidence for the idea that the assertiveness which was expressed during the 1880s had complex roots. Nevertheless, the work of Murdoch and others meant that a growing interest group began to apply pressure on specific demands, such as the appointment of a Royal Commission.

The catalyst for protest in the Highlands was a severe downturn in economic and social conditions in late 1881. These events brought another dominant perception of the Highlander into the limelight: that of the poverty-stricken claimant for philanthropic relief. This had been present in the famine of the 1840s and although the conditions produced by the bad weather of late 1881 were not analogous to the total decimation of economic resources in the 1840s, it is instructive to examine briefly the response of opinion to the condition of the Highlands in the later period. The emergence of determined protests at several points, mostly on the island of Skye, strongly coloured attitudes to the Highlands in this period, especially in the light of events in Ireland.

November 1881 saw a fearsome storm visit the West Highlands and Islands. The destruction which this wrought, especially to fishing boats and gear, can scarcely be exaggerated; a report from North Skye claimed that it was the worst in living memory.¹⁸ The need to provide relief resulted in a number of meetings in the main towns of the Highlands and beyond in late 1881 and early 1882. This put the Highlands on the wider agenda of public life in Scotland, but in a rather submissive manner. These meetings did not link the social and economic condition of the stricken crofters to their tenurial grievances; statements concerned the need to relieve a suffering, but respectable population. Land agitators were notable by their absence, as ministers and other members of the middle classes enunciated appeals on behalf of those who had suffered. The Rev. Mackinnon of Strath, Skye, for example, stated that the object 'was to give

¹⁸*Inverness Courier*, 24, 29 Nov. 1881.

men—frugal, law abiding, brave and industrious—rendered destitute by an appalling and sudden calamity, the means of earning a livelihood'. The Rev. Dr Mackay of the Free North Church in Inverness rounded off his appeal with some hyperbole:¹⁹

In religion, in morals, in frugal industry, in bravery and in all those good qualities that go to make up good men and women, he believed the fishing population of the West Coast were unsurpassed by any other class in the country.

There is some evidence to suggest that this image was also part of the mindset of the crofting community, although it may have been engendered by fear and tenurial insecurity. Sir John M'Neill remarked in his 1851 report that:²⁰

the working classes in the parishes I have visited . . . contrasted their own loyalty and respect for the law with occurrences in [Ireland], and asked whether it was possible that the Queen, after doing so much for a rebellious people, who had set the laws at defiance, should refuse all assistance to a people who had constantly been loyal and orderly.

In considering this matter it is also sensible to bear in mind the possibility that M'Neill was giving greater emphasis than necessary to this point of view because it matched his own.

This perception of the peaceable and loyal Highlander was challenged by the protests of 1882. There had been protests in the 1870s, especially at Bernera in Lewis and Leckmelm in Wester Ross; 1881 had seen rent strikes on the Kilmuir estate in the north of Skye and the establishment of the Skye Vigilance Committee. Nevertheless, the scale of protest in 1882 was of a quite different order. The 'Battle of the Braes' was the event which put the grievances of the crofters on the wider political agenda. The crofters of Braes and the MacDonald estate management disputed the rights

¹⁹*Inverness Courier*, 16 Feb. 1882.

²⁰PP 1851 XXVI, *Report to the Board of Supervision by Sir John M'Neill G.C.B. on the Western Highlands and Islands*, iv.

to grazing on Ben Lee. The crofters continually grazed their animals on land which the estate wished to lease as a sheep farm, and legal attempts to prevent them resulted in deforcement of sheriff officers. Ultimately, a large body of police had to be drafted from outside the Highlands to force their way into the township, running the gauntlet as they did so, in order to make the necessary arrests.²¹ The events were dramatic enough, but what made the Battle of the Braes significant was the publicity which it received; it was widely reported in the press of London, of Lowland Scotland and, significantly, of Ireland. It has been suggested that in addition to these factors the Battle of the Braes received wider prominence than, say, the Leckmelm evictions, because events in Ireland and the paranoia of the Sheriff of Inverness, William Ivory, made 'a movement out of a very minor land dispute'.²² For some who professed to be leaders of opinion in the Highlands it was merely an import from Ireland. For Sheriff Alexander Nicolson of Kirkcudbright, a native of Skye, or Charles Fraser Mackintosh in his pre-Crofter-MP days, agitation was to be condemned. Nicolson deprecated the Battle of the Braes on the grounds that 'alas Skyemen are imitating the Irish, and making themselves objects of derision and dread'.²³ Fraser Mackintosh also prophesied doom for the Highlands if Irish practices were emulated; he argued that the region would suffer if its population came to be seen as 'discontented and disaffected'.²⁴ It is interesting to note that both Nicolson and Fraser Mackintosh were appointed to the long awaited Royal Commission,

²¹I. M. M. MacPhail, *The Crofters War* (Stornoway 1989), 36–45; Hunter, *Crofting Community*, 133–7; Ewen A. Cameron, *Land for the People? The British Government and the Scottish Highlands, c.1880–1925* (East Linton 1996), 17.

²²H. J. Hanham, 'The problem of Highland discontent, 1880–85', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series, 19 (1969) 21–65, at 64–5.

²³'Address to the People' by Sheriff Alexander Nicolson, Kirkcudbright, *Inverness Courier*, 25 Apr. 1882. For a discussion of Nicolson's views see Ewen A. Cameron and Andrew Newby, ' "Alas, Skyemen are imitating the Irish": a note on Alexander Nicolson's "Little leaflet" concerning the crofters' agitation', *Innes Review* 55 (2004) 83–92.

²⁴*Inverness Courier*, 25 Nov. 1882.

chaired by Lord Napier, which began its investigation into the grievances of the crofters in 1883. Thus the reception given to crofter assertiveness was far from uniformly positive, even from individuals who have been identified as being supporters of the cause of the crofters.

A further development in 1882, which in many ways can be seen as the key year in the development of protest in the Highlands, was the institutionalisation and organisation of the crofters' movement. The core of the movement was already in existence in the form of the Federation of Celtic Societies, which had been in existence since 1878, and the Skye Vigilance Committee, which had been formed in mid-1881 in response to the difficulties of crofters on the Kilmuir estate. The reaction to the agitation on Skye replicated in an expanded form the reaction to the Leckmelm evictions a year earlier. Meetings were held in Glasgow in May 1882, and in London in February 1883. Thus the importance of linking up events in the Highlands with the politically active urban Gaels was established at an early stage. This brought people like Gavin B. Clark, Angus Sutherland and Roderick Macdonald, all to become Crofter MPs, to prominence. Three organisations established in late 1882 or early 1883 formed the core of the crofters' movement: the Highland Land Law Reform Associations of London and Edinburgh, and the Sutherland Association.²⁵ The first use of the term Highland Land Law Reform Association had come in March 1882, before the establishment of the organisations in either Edinburgh, London or Sutherland, even before the Battle of the Braes, and it was associated with a group in Inverness. The objects of the new association were as follows:²⁶

...by constitutional means, and irrespective of party politics, to effect such changes in the Land Laws as shall prevent the waste of large tracts of productive lands in the North, shall provide security of tenure, increased protection to the tillers of the soil, and promote the

²⁵MacPhail, *Crofters' War*, 88–93; Hunter, *Crofting Community*, 143.

²⁶*Inverness Courier*, 2 Mar. 1882.

general welfare of the people, particularly throughout the Highlands of Scotland.

This was an organisation of prominent Liberals confined to the town of Inverness: most of the executive were journalists, ministers of various denominations, or businessmen. There was no serious attention given to the task of reaching out to the grass-roots of the crofting community in the way that the London, Edinburgh and Sutherland Land Law Reform Associations would do the following year in response to the opportunity offered by the Napier Commission. The emphasis on 'constitutional means' and the policy prescription of security of tenure indicates the distance between this group and more radical ideas on the land question which were current in the 1880s and which will be explored below.

The sudden storms of November 1881 had destroyed a potentially prosperous year. The winter of 1882–3 was difficult for the crofters and cottars of the west coast and the islands, but in a different way. In late September it became clear that the potato blight, which had struck periodically since 1846, was 'virulent throughout the west coast'.²⁷ In addition, there was also the added blow of a dramatic failure of earnings from the fishing industry which was such a vital prop to the crofting communities of the west and the islands.²⁸ The geographical concentration of the crisis was notable: the worst conditions were in the Hebrides and particularly Skye and Lewis, the two islands which relied to the greatest extent on earnings from the east coast fishing. Evidence from other areas, where the economy was more mixed, suggest that the impact of the crisis was variable. It is notable, however, that the agitation in 1883 was at its peak in Skye and Lewis, the very areas where the potato failures and collapse of earnings from fishing were most keenly felt.²⁹ Thus, the crisis was the same kind of multifaceted event as had struck the Highlands in

²⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 28 Sept. 1882.

²⁸ Hunter, *Crofting Community*, 131; MacPhail, *Crofters' War*, 229, Appendix D.

²⁹ 'Copy of Minute of Parochial Board of Gairloch', *Alleged Destitution*; see report of 'Meeting of the Natives of Lochaber in Inverness', *Inverness Courier*, 19 Dec. 1882.

the late 1840s (indeed, local observers in Lewis reckoned conditions to be worse than in 1846): as the second bad winter in succession and coming after the events at Kilmuir, Braes, and Glendale and after the beginnings of the organisation of the crofters' movement, it augmented the protests which had already occurred.³⁰ It added great weight to the demands for a Royal Commission to examine the causes of the crofters' grievances. Further, 1883 saw more widespread, organised and politicised protest than either of the previous two years.

It would be an extensive project to chart Lowland reactions to the crofters' protests. Space permits only a brief case study to go alongside the comments on the protests of 1882 and 1883. The event chosen is protest on the island of Tiree in autumn 1886. The dispute concerning the farm of Greenhill has been explored in detail elsewhere.³¹ It should be noted that these events took place after the passage of the Crofters' Act and under the Conservative government elected in July 1886. Arthur Balfour had been appointed Secretary for Scotland with the specific brief of cracking down on protest in the Highlands (he was later sent to Ireland for the same purpose); this he assuredly did in the case of Tiree, sending a military expedition to the island and effecting arrests. Those arrested were handed down relatively long sentences of four and six months.³²

The events on Tiree produced a considerable reaction in Lowland Scotland.³³ The Scottish Office received representations on the treatment of the Tiree crofters from many organisations of Radicals and Highlanders. Most protested against the severity of the sentences imposed: the Dunfermline Radical Association reminded the Scottish Office that the jury had unanimously recommended leniency in this

³⁰*Alleged Destitution*.

³¹Hunter, *Crofting Community*, 163–5; MacPhail, *Crofters' War*, 186–92.

³²MacPhail, *Crofters' War*, 191.

³³*North British Daily Mail*, 27 Jul., 2 Aug., 21 Oct. 1886. The *Mail* was a Liberal paper owned by Dr Charles Cameron, the MP for the College Division of Glasgow, who had been one of the first Parliamentarians to raise the issue of the crofters.

case.³⁴ The 'Memorial of the Inhabitants of Dunoon' noted that the 'Tiree prisoners are men of good character who consider that they have hereditary rights to the soil which have been forcibly and unjustly taken from them.' The absence of 'personal violence' was noted and a more general point was made:³⁵

The Highlanders have hitherto been so law-abiding that policemen, Sheriffs and such like officials have been to them almost unknown. They do not in consequence as yet, associate with them the Majesty of the Law. So that deforcement in Tiree and deforcement in quarters where appeal to legal officials is a daily occurrence cannot be regarded in the same light.

The combination of basic historicism and an appeal to the government that Highlanders should be treated lightly due to their isolation, both physical and institutional, makes this an especially notable perception. The notions of passivity and respectability, considered to be a strong characteristic of the crofters prior to 1882, and partly compromised by subsequent events, were here being reworked to fit new circumstances.³⁶

Of course, it would be absurd to suggest that all perceptions of this event were positive. As well as the routine denunciations of establishment newspapers such as the *Times*, which declared there to be 'war in Tiree', the *National Review*, a Tory periodical, printed a letter on the specific subject of the 'Tiree Crofters' which rebutted

³⁴N[ational] A[rchives of] S[cotland], Home and Health Department, Miscellaneous Files, HH1/296, Resolution from Dunfermline Radical Association, 21 Dec. 1886.

³⁵NAS, HH1/285, Memorial of the Inhabitants of Dunoon, 5 Nov. 1886.

³⁶See, in addition to the documents quoted above, NAS HH1/287, Petition of the Inhabitants of Greenock, 19 Nov. 1886; HH1/288, Resolution of Edinburgh Advanced Radical and Liberal Association, 18 Nov. 1886; HH1/289, Resolution of the Elgin Radical Association, 17 Nov. 1886; HH1/290, Resolution of a Public Meeting in the Town Hall, Campbeltown, 22 Dec. 1886; HH1/292, Resolution of the Citizens of Edinburgh at a Public Meeting at the Literary Institute, 25 Nov. 1886; HH1/293, Resolution of the Edinburgh United Trades Council, 4 Dec 1886; HH1/295, Resolution of Paisley Highlanders' Association, 22 Dec. 1886; HH1/299, Resolution of a Public Meeting of the Inhabitants of Paisley, 14 Jan. 1887; HH1/303, Petition from Highland Reform League of Glasgow, 27 Jan. 1887.

many of the arguments commonly put forward in support of the crofters. The author noted that crofting was a 'modern institution, as modern in its character as any other tenant farm' and pointed to the 'unselfish excellence of the Highland proprietor'.³⁷ The crofters' movement did not deny the modernity of the crofting system, but suggested that in its creation much damage had been done. The situation in Tiree was slightly at variance with the norm, as the 8th Duke of Argyll had in the 1840s modified the crofting system by attempting to eradicate those with the smallest holdings—a course of action which he viewed with pride and recommended as a model which other proprietors should follow.³⁸ The correspondent of the *National Review* argued that crofters should not be treated as special cases by the authorities: 'In the throb of sentiment it is a good deal overlooked that these men are the prisoners of the law, and that they should be treated as subjects of its justice.'³⁹

The protests of the 1880s brought the grievances of the crofters to a much wider audience than ever before. The protests themselves, however, clashed with the traditional perception of the Highlander as a peaceable and loyal citizen. This perception was not only an external construct but something which individuals who saw themselves as 'leading Highlanders', such as Alexander Mackenzie, Sheriff Nicolson or Charles Fraser Mackintosh, wished to sustain. Some evidence allows us to suggest that this view may have permeated the crofting community, although fear is a factor which should not be ruled out. Although the protesting crofters were much more interested in practical solutions to tangible problems than in abstract political ideas, the latter did emerge in connection with the Highland land question. It is to the political dimension that we should now turn to investigate further layers of perception.

³⁷ *Times*, 24 Jul. 1886; 'Scotchman', 'The Tiree Crofters', *National Review* 8 (1886–7) 141–2.

³⁸ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, *Crofts and Farms in the Hebrides* (Edinburgh 1883); T. M. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration, and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh 1988), 226–44.

³⁹ 'Scotchman', 'The Tiree Crofters', 141–2.

Politics

The visibility of the Highlands in this period was enhanced by the fact that the land question was a key political issue during the 1880s. Land agitation in Ireland and the Scottish Highlands were complemented by the 'Revolt of the Field' in England and disorder over tithes payable by Welsh dissenters to the Church of England in Wales.⁴⁰ The 1880s also saw the growth of a very wide variety of Radical movements: the land question was at the heart of many of them. In particular, notions of 'Land Nationalisation' were espoused by Radicals such as Alfred Russel Wallace, the famous evolutionist, who was prominent in the Land Nationalisation Society—an organisation which also contained Dr G. B. Clark, the future Crofter MP for Caithness. Clark was also, briefly, a member of H. M. Hyndman's Democratic (later Social Democratic) Federation, an organisation which regarded the nationalisation of land as a necessary, but not sufficient, measure for social reform. Its supporters were reminded in 1884:⁴¹

...we warn the Nationalisers once more that Land Nationalisation by itself will not benefit the labourers and that only by a complete

⁴⁰Interestingly, there have been few attempts to write about the land agitations of this decade in a 'British' context, but see J. P. D. Dunbabin, *Rural Discontent in Nineteenth Century Britain* (New York 1974) for an excellent attempt to do so. Roy Douglas, *Land People and Politics: a History of the Land Question in the United Kingdom, 1878–1952* (London 1976) is a much less successful treatment.

⁴¹'Land Nationalisation', *Justice*, 11 Nov. 1884; for a fuller discussion of the difference in views between Hyndman and George, see Henry George and H. M. Hyndman, 'Socialism and rent-appropriation: a dialogue', *Nineteenth Century* 17 (1885) 369–80. George argued 'Whatever varying social relations may exist among men, land always remains the prime necessity—the only indispensable requisite for existence' (at 376); Hyndman countered '...I consider the landlord to be a mere appendage to the capitalist, and that you cannot get at the land with any advantage to the people except through capital' (at 376). However, they agreed that peasant proprietorship was of no value as a solution to the land question. Hyndman remarked, 'we are thoroughly of one mind, that no benefit can accrue by such an extension of the rights of private property' (at 377). For information on Hyndman, see *Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals*, edd. Joseph Baylen and Norbert J. Gossman, vol. iii, 1870–1914, A–K (Hemel Hempstead 1988), 475–80.

overthrow of competition and the capitalist system of production for profit can any permanent good be obtained for the working class.

The Irish land reformer Michael Davitt was unusual among his colleagues in the Irish Land League in being a staunch advocate of land nationalisation, as was the maverick Welsh radical Rev. Evan Pan Jones.⁴² The second principal strand of radical thinking on the land question in this period originated in the writings of the American land reformer Henry George. George's holistic approach to the land question revolved around the notion of abolishing taxation on income and consumption and replacing it with a 'Single Tax' on the full value of private landownership which would release urban and rural tenants from the thrall of landlordism.⁴³

In the realm of more conventional party politics two ideas dominated the debate on the land question. The Liberal Party concentrated their efforts in Scotland and Ireland on giving tenants greater protection in their relationship with their landlords, through fixity (or security) of tenure, the right to apply to a land court for a fair rent, and the right of free sale. These ideas formed the basis of the Irish Land Act of 1881 and this, with the exception of free sale, was used as the model for the Crofters' Act of 1886. The Conservative party deprecated tinkering with the rights of landlords and argued that the tenants should pay a fair price and take over ownership of their holdings.⁴⁴

These debates brought the Scottish Highlands to the forefront of political exchanges, among both Radical and Parliamentary opinion; this yields much evidence for perceptions of the Highlands in this period. If poverty and protest were the first two prisms through

⁴²P. Jones-Evans, 'Evan Pan Jones—land reformer', *Welsh History Review* 4 (1968–9) 143–59.

⁴³Henry George, *Progress and Poverty* (London 1880).

⁴⁴Cameron, *Land for the People?*, 62–101. Radical and Nationalist apoplexy had been evident in 1886 when Gladstone proposed to combine his proposals for Irish Home Rule with a lavishly funded land purchase scheme; see Graham D. Goodlad, 'The Liberal Party and Gladstone's Land Purchase Bill of 1886', *Historical Journal* 32 (1989) 627–41, at 641.

which the Highlands were perceived in the 1880s, politics was the third—and arguably the most important.

There is no difficulty in finding evidence of the perceptions of the Highlands held by politicians of various hues, as the involvement in debate on Highland questions was much wider in this decade than at any other point in the nineteenth century. This was a direct result of the poverty and protest which has been discussed above, but also a result of the louder voices coming from within the Highlands, through the evidence given to the Napier Commission, and the election of Crofter MPs at the General Elections of 1885 and 1886. There were two facets to this debate: the first was the use of the grievances evident in the Scottish Highlands by politicians with wider purposes. It is questionable whether the abstract ideas presented by Davitt and Henry George, or metropolitan Radical periodicals such as *Justice*, had much effect on the course of the Crofters' War. The parliamentary debates over the abortive Crofters' Bills of 1885 and 1886 are also worthy of examination.

This section of the essay will examine the impact of Michael Davitt and Henry George, both of whom brought ideas from the wider arena to the Highlands. Davitt was the only one of the front rank of Irish land reformers who took a sustained interest in the Scottish Highlands. This has been presented as part of Davitt's wider internationalist views, evidence of his commitment to social justice regardless of national boundaries. As his biographer notes:⁴⁵

From 1882 onwards he was the most striking exponent of the idea that the democratisation of the United Kingdom Parliament and the winning of Home Rule for Ireland were the common interest of working men, both British and Irish. In his self appointed task of preaching this gospel in Britain he made full use of his doctrine of land nationalisation as a link between the cause of 'the land for the people' and the interest of all workers.

⁴⁵T. W. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution, 1846–82* (Oxford 1982), 548; see also T. W. Moody, 'Michael Davitt and the British Labour Movement, 1882–1906', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series, 3 (1953) 53–76.

In this cause Davitt made two appearances in the Scottish Highlands. The first took place in late 1882; he made a speech in Inverness in which he advocated land nationalisation, a doctrine which was considerably in advance of the demands being made by the emerging crofters' movement.⁴⁶ Although he was in contact with John Murdoch and the Glasgow-based Irish nationalist John Ferguson, there is little evidence that Davitt was aware of the limited agenda of the crofters' movement. His perception of the Highland agitation was as a second front in the battle against the institution of landlordism, rather than as an indigenous movement with more muted objectives. Davitt's second visit to the Scottish Highlands took place in 1887. Two factors ensured that the context of this tour was different from the 1882 visit. Firstly, Davitt went beyond the urban sophisticates of Inverness to engage more closely with the crofting community; secondly, this tour took place after the 1886 rejection of Gladstone's Irish Home Rule Bill, a fact which put Davitt's views at variance with the MP for Inverness-shire, Charles Fraser Mackintosh, who had voted against the Bill. The leaders of the Highland Land League who promoted Davitt's visit used it to foment dissatisfaction with their MP over his views on Irish Home Rule.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, despite the altered context of the visit, Davitt's message was largely unchanged from 1882. In Portree he argued:⁴⁸

In many respects we are not only identical in race, but in political and social aspirations as well. The land system that has impoverished Ireland and made it the home of misery and agrarian crime has also been felt in this island and other parts of Scotland. I am sure the

⁴⁶*Inverness Courier*, 7 Nov. 1882. There is a limited analysis of Davitt's Inverness speech in Paul Harding, 'John Murdoch, Michael Davitt and the Land Question: a Study in Comparative Irish and Scottish History', unpublished M.Litt. thesis (University of Aberdeen 1994), 85–8. A more substantial discussion can be found in Andrew G. Newby, *Ireland, Radicalism and the Scottish Highlands, c. 1870–1912* (Edinburgh 2007), 72–84, 146–53.

⁴⁷Ewen A. Cameron, *The Life and Times of Charles Fraser Mackintosh, Crofter MP* (Aberdeen 2000), 185–6.

⁴⁸*Scottish Highlander*, 5 May 1887.

people of Skye are convinced that if the Irish succeed in abolishing landlordism, an effective blow will be struck at the root of a similar evil system in your islands.

The views of Henry George on how the Highlands fitted into the wider debate on social reform were very different from Davitt's.⁴⁹ George was probably the most controversial figure to visit the Highlands in this period and his reception there was contested. Although one report in the *Oban Times* said of his tour to Skye in early 1884 that 'His views fell like a shower of nectar upon the auditors', a report the following week struck a more measured tone: 'his views on some points in connection with the land question are for the most part considered to be extreme, yet ... he gave utterance to a vast deal of truth on the important question with which he dealt'.⁵⁰ George had been represented as a 'wild atheistical socialist', and on his tours he found evidence of the fearful state of the crofting community, and counselled them to 'struggle to amend the law if it were unjust, and if they submitted to unjust law they were as responsible as the landlord'.⁵¹ George was particularly critical of the Highland clergy for stifling the protests of the crofters and was especially pleased to hear the views of the Rev. Donald MacCallum, Church of Scotland minister at Waternish, and a leading advocate of the cause of the crofters. Tailoring his remarks to the historical sensibilities of his Scottish audience, George remarked in Glasgow, 'Here at last was a man who came forth at a critical time, as John Knox came forth ... and he rejoiced that Mr M'Callum stood not alone'.⁵²

⁴⁹This has already been done to an extent. See Charles Albro Barker, *Henry George* (New York 1955), 378–416; Elwood P. Lawrence, *Henry George in the British Isles* (East Lansing, Michigan 1957), 42–3, 45, 58; John R. Frame, 'America and the Scottish Left: the Impact of American Ideas on the Scottish Labour Movement from the American Civil War to World War One', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Aberdeen 1998), 77–118. See also *Dictionary of American Biography*, edd. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (New York 1959–60) iv, 211–15.

⁵⁰*Oban Times*, 23 Feb., 1 Mar. 1884.

⁵¹*Oban Times*, 1 Mar. 1884; 10 Jan. 1885.

⁵²*Oban Times*, 31 Jan. 1885.

Perhaps because of his fundamental challenge to the system of private landownership Henry George encountered a critical reception throughout the United Kingdom, and, usefully, his views stimulated debate. Even the radical Liberal Joseph Chamberlain felt that his theories were 'wild' and his methods 'unjust'.⁵³ One of the most notable debates in which George engaged was with the Duke of Argyll.⁵⁴ George had sent a copy of *Progress and Poverty* to the Duke, who was known as one of the principal defenders of private landownership in the 1880s.⁵⁵ The Duke argued that the increment gained from privately owned land was not, as George argued, 'unearned', pointing to his own investments in improvements.⁵⁶ He was particularly exercised by George's proposal to resume the ownership of land without compensating the landowner, regarding this as corrupt in its breach of commercial principles and the level of probity which a property holder had the right to expect from the state.⁵⁷ Argyll referred to George as 'a Preacher of Unrighteousness' and labelled his teaching as 'immoral'.⁵⁸ In his reply George denied that land was a commodity to which property rights could be attached, on the grounds that 'the exclusive ownership of land has everywhere had its beginnings in force and fraud, in selfish greed and unscrupulous cunning'.⁵⁹ If the Duke had sought to defend the

⁵³J. Chamberlain, 'Labourers' and artisans' dwellings', *Fortnightly Review* 34 (1883) 761–76, at 761–2.

⁵⁴Duke of Argyll, 'The Prophet of San Francisco', *Nineteenth Century* 15 (1884) 537–58; Henry George, 'The "Reduction to Iniquity"', *Nineteenth Century* 16 (1884) 134–55.

⁵⁵H. C. G. Matthew, 'Campbell, George Douglas, eighth duke of Argyll in the peerage of Scotland, and first duke of Argyll in the peerage of the United Kingdom (1823–1900)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford 2004), edd. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4500: accessed 21 Oct 2004]; K. M. Mulhern, 'The intellectual duke: George Douglas Campbell, eighth duke of Argyll, 1823–1900', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Edinburgh 2006), 190–232, esp. 221–3.

⁵⁶Argyll, 'Prophet', 553–5.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 546–8.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 548, 557.

⁵⁹George, 'The "Reduction to Iniquity"', 139.

system of private landownership with reference to the Highlands then George took up the challenge.⁶⁰

Test the institution of private property in land by its fruits in any country where it exists. Take Scotland. What, there, are its results? That wild beasts have supplanted human beings; that glens which once sent forth their thousand fighting men are now tenanted by a couple of gamekeepers; that there is destitution and degradation that would shame savages; that little children are stunted and starved for want of proper nourishment; that women are compelled to do the work of animals; that young girls who ought to be fitting themselves for wifehood and motherhood are held to monotonous toil in factories, while others, whose fate is sadder still, prowl the streets; that while a few Scotsmen have castles and palaces, more than a third of Scottish families live in one room each, and more than two thirds in not more than two rooms each; that thousands of acres are kept as playgrounds for strangers, while the masses have not enough of their native soil to grow a flower, are shut out even from moor and mountain, dare not take a trout from a loch or a salmon from a stream.

George went on to argue that the Malthusian pressures which the Duke identified in the Highlands were the result of the misappropriation of land by the landlords and, further, that the investments made by landowners in improving their estates came from rents extorted from tenants who might have been able to carry out improvements of equal value had they not been exploited in this manner.⁶¹ George also pointed to the submissive nature of the crofters and the way in which clergymen had engendered such 'tame submission of the Highland people to outrages which should have nerved the most timid ...'.⁶² Although George's diagnosis of the grievances of the Highland crofters may have shared much with the Highland Land Law Reform Associations, the solution he proposed was far in advance of their notions of secure tenancy and extended

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 146.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 150–1.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 154.

availability of land. He was firm in his advocacy of the 'Single Tax' as a universal solution of the land problem, and he viewed the Highlands not as a special case but as part of the wider problem which required such treatment. The vehicle which he hoped to use to achieve this in Scotland was the Scottish Land Restoration League, established in Glasgow in 1884.⁶³ George's Scottish lieutenant, James Shaw Maxwell, took the message of the Scottish Land Restoration League to the Portree Conference of the Highland Land Law Reform Associations in September 1885, where he argued:⁶⁴

...the men of the south were watching the progress of the land movement in Skye with the greatest interest. It was not a crofter question; it was more gigantic than many of the crofters themselves believed it to be. Not only were the crofters liberating themselves, but they were striking off the chains of slavery and thralldom which bind their poor brethren in the cities. This was noble work, and he was proud to say that he saw at the conference that the crofters recognised this, and were determined to carry out these broad and equitable principles.

The 'men of the south' did indeed have an eye on the crofter question but they were interested in it as part of a wider social challenge, as Shaw Maxwell indicated in his speech. The Social Democratic Federation passed a resolution in July 1884 which declared that 'nothing short of Land Nationalisation will solve this question'.⁶⁵ This was typical of London pressure groups who advocated land nationalisation; they made little effort to inform themselves of the details of the crofters' grievances but merely used the agitation as an example of the kind of situation where their prescriptions should apply. For example *Justice*, commenting on the Portree Conference, remarked: 'A really revolutionary movement in the North is most welcome at a time when our most advanced Radicals are still pottering with "Free Land" and Peasant Proprietary

⁶³*Ibid.*, 155; Barker, *Henry George*, 400.

⁶⁴*Oban Times*, 12 Sept. 1885.

⁶⁵*Justice*, 5 July 1884.

in the interest of the capitalist class'.⁶⁶ Although it is tempting to see the Crofters' War as part of a general assault on the forces of landlordism, it is vital, as noted above, to stress the limited nature of crofters' demands. Hyndman and his colleagues were very critical of the recommendations of the Napier Commission, for example, regarding it as having been 'written as it manifestly is in the interests of the landlords'; MPs like Charles Fraser Mackintosh and Donald MacFarlane were portrayed as being overly cautious in comparison with the crofters.⁶⁷ Two further points which emerge from *Justice* are the emphasis placed on the importance of raising the consciousness of urban workers on the land question, and the injustice of commercialised sport in the Highlands. The former is a recurring theme, especially of those who took a Georgeite view of the land question. J. L. Joynes, who had been arrested with Henry George in Ireland in 1882 (an event which ended his career as a Master at Eton), noted that the grievances of the crofters were 'cosmopolitan in nature' but that the area was 'cut off from communication with the rest of the world' resulting in the crimes of Highland landowners not being subjected to the necessary criticism at the bar of public opinion.⁶⁸

Deer Forests and the exploitation of large tracts of land for the purpose of commercialised sport had become one of the most visible aspects of landholding in the Highlands. Indeed, it could be argued that this was one of the dominant perceptions of the region, either by critics of such a system or by sportsmen.⁶⁹ The Highland Land Law Reform Associations fastened onto this as one of the most pressing

⁶⁶*Justice*, 12 Sept. 1885; see also 14 Mar. 1885.

⁶⁷*Justice*, 3 May 1884; 12 Sept. 1885.

⁶⁸*Justice*, 29 Mar. 1884; see also 18 Apr. 1885. For Joynes see *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, edd. Joyce M. Bellamy, Greg Rosen, Keith Gildart, David Howell, Neville Kirk, David Martin and John Saville, 12 vols. (London 1972–2005) viii, 129–33. He recounted the tale of his arrest in Ireland in 'A Political Tour in Ireland', *Times*, 4 Sept. 1882; a fuller account can be found in James L. Joynes, *The Adventures of a Tourist in Ireland* (London 1882).

⁶⁹This is fully discussed in Willie Orr, *Deer Forests, Landlords and Crofters: The Western Highlands in Victorian and Edwardian Times* (Edinburgh 1982).

grievances of the crofters, and the issue provided the left wing press, such as *Justice*, with good opportunity to occupy the moral high ground in its editorials:

We are evidently on the brink of hostilities in the far North. Every train to Scotland is heavily laden with its cargo of guns, ammunition, and provisions of all kinds; and every evening there is a busy scene at Euston Square and King's Cross, at the time of the night express ... The jaded statesmen, who have done so much benefit to the English people in their late Parliamentary labours, the "mashers" and "men about town" who naturally need some recreation after the exhausting duties of a London season, all these useful members of society are now off to Scotland to shoot grouse. It is right and proper that after much idling they should do a little killing.

The sardonic editorial finished on a more political note: 'The Highlands are not yet a paradise, even under a beneficent English rule; indeed a very clear proof of the contrary may be seen in the annual incursion of English sportsmen and the annual exodus of dispossessed Scottish crofters'.⁷⁰

The parliamentary debates on the two Crofters' Bills also provide an opportunity to assess political perceptions of the Highlands. The debates in 1885 took place prior to the election of the Crofter MPs, those of 1886 after their election, but both were conditioned by the fact that the Government's commitment to legislate on Irish Home Rule meant that only a limited amount of Parliamentary time could be devoted to the Crofters' Bill. This meant that the Crofter MPs, dissatisfied with the limited nature of the Bill, had few opportunities to persuade the government to amend it. At first sight these debates appear to have attracted a very wide range of contributions, but many of the participants had a tangible connection with the Highlands. Some of the most prominent backbench contributors to these debates who did not represent Highland constituencies are worthy of further consideration.

Sir George Campbell, the MP for the Kirkcaldy Burghs, who

⁷⁰'The War in the North', *Justice*, 18 Aug. 1885.

specialised in matters of land tenure during his parliamentary career, had been elected to the House of Commons in 1874 after a distinguished career in India, during which he had advanced the notion of tenant right in the Central Provinces.⁷¹ He had also been an influence on Gladstone during the construction of the Irish Land Act of 1870.⁷² He toured Ireland in 1869 and produced a short book detailing his views on the Irish land question.⁷³ Campbell recognised that in Ireland—as in the Scottish Highlands—it was the tenant, rather than the landowner, who made the bulk of the improvements. Campbell and others argued that the legislative recognition of this *de facto* situation was urgently required.⁷⁴ During his time in the House of Commons Campbell took an interest in the Highland land question; he advocated the appointment of a Royal Commission and defended its conclusions.⁷⁵ During the debates on the Crofters' Bill in 1886 he argued that the provisions suggested by the government did not go nearly far enough in offering financial assistance to the crofters; financial support for the fishing industry was merely

⁷¹G. Le G Northgate, 'Campbell, Sir George (1824–1892)', rev. David Steele, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4499>: accessed 21 Oct. 2004]; Sir Richard Temple, *Men and Events of My Time in India* (London 1882), 238.

⁷²E. D. Steele, *Irish Land and British Politics: Tenant Right and Nationality, 1865–1870* (Cambridge 1974), 104–8; R. D. C. Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817–1870* (Cambridge 1960), 55.

⁷³Sir George Campbell, *The Irish Land* (London 1869), 24; Sir George Campbell, 'The Tenure of Land in India', in *Systems of Land Tenure in Various Countries: A Series of Essays Published under the Sanction of the Cobden Club*, ed. J. W. Probyn (London 1881), 213–89.

⁷⁴Campbell, *Irish Land*, 7–12; P. MacLagan, *Land Culture and Land Tenure in Ireland: The Results of Observations during a Recent Tour in Ireland* (Edinburgh 1869). MacLagan was the M.P. for Linlithgowshire; W. E. Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants in Mid Victorian Ireland* (Oxford 1994), 67–102. See also Ewen A. Cameron, 'Communication or separation? Reactions to Irish land agitation and legislation in the highlands of Scotland, c. 1870–1910', *English Historical Review* 120 (2005), 633–66, at 650–1, 656; Peter Gray, 'Famine and land in Ireland and India, 1845–1880: James Caird and the political economy of hunger', *Historical Journal* 49 (2006), 193–215, at 198–200.

⁷⁵*P[arliamentary] D[e]bates*, 3rd S[eries, volume] 276, [column]169; *ibid.*, 289, 1638.

exacerbating the injustices faced by them. He noted:⁷⁶

It was the evictors cry to drive the people to the sea; and the Bill would play into the evictors hands by making loans to fishermen, and not to crofters, for the improvement of their farms. The poverty of the people proposed to be benefited by the Bill was notorious. They were not small farmers, but a congested, impoverished, squeezed out race. He did not advocate emigration; but he was convinced that the object of the Bill could never be effected without a considerable amount of migration. If they wanted to benefit these people, they must do something to migrate them to these parts of Scotland from which their ancestors were expelled; and for that purpose it was absolutely necessary that some pecuniary assistance should be given to them.

Campbell's importance stems not from his status as a marginal member of the House of Commons, but from his influential position as a leading advocate of historicist views of the land question in Britain, partly drawn from his experiences in India.⁷⁷

Joel Picton, the diminutive radical MP for Leicester, had been a heterodox Congregationalist minister in Manchester, Leicester and London. Throughout his clerical career he had displayed an interest in the welfare of the working class and in the issue of education, which, in his capacity as a member of the London School Board, he argued should be secular. As in the case of Sir George Campbell, his style of oratory reputedly did not endear him to the House of Commons.⁷⁸ Picton had spoken at the conference of the Highland Land Law Reform Associations in Portree in September 1885 where he indicated that his interest arose from his 'sympathy with suffering

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 304, 122–3.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 304, 851, where he pointed out that the notion of common grazings was familiar to him as he had 'been accustomed to them all my life in India'; Clive Dewey, 'Celtic agrarian legislation and the Celtic revival: historicist implications of Gladstone's Irish and Scottish Land Acts, 1870–1886', *Past and Present* no. 64 (August 1974) 30–70.

⁷⁸Stephen C. Orchard, 'Picton, James Allanson (1832–1910)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35527>: accessed 3 Aug. 2006]; *Times*, 7 Feb. 1910.

men all the world over' before going on to argue: 'The land was surely for the benefit of all who were sent by Divine Providence upon it, at anyrate till its resources were exhausted. Were the resources of the land exhausted? It was insulting to their common sense to tell them that the Highlands were overpeopled'.⁷⁹ Picton argued that the Game Laws lay at the heart of the grievances of rural populations throughout Britain. He made a number of interventions on behalf of the crofters in 1885 and 1886. In the debates of 1886 two of the most controversial areas of debate on the Crofters' Bill were the extent to which its provisions should be confined to the Highlands, and the weakness of the provisions for making more land available to crofters. Picton struck at both in a speech during the Committee stage of the Bill. Despite his belief, enunciated at Portree the previous year, that the grievances of the crofters were part of a wider problem, he felt that the Crofters' Bill should be confined to the Highlands (although he did not define what he meant by this) on purely historicist grounds: 'Many Highlanders can point out plots from which their grandfathers were evicted'.⁸⁰ He went on to argue that he did not think it was sufficient that five crofters had to agree to make an application for such a grievance to be righted.

Sir John Ramsden, who represented the Eastern Division of the West Riding of Yorkshire from 1880 to 1885, was also vocal in the debates on the Crofters' Bill. He had a tangible connection with the Highlands in that he owned the Ardverikie estate in Inverness-shire (Charles Fraser Mackintosh, the Crofter MP for Inverness-shire, had assisted in the administration of this estate before he entered

⁷⁹ *Oban Times*, 12 Sept. 1885. The Portree Conference was an interesting moment in the history of the crofter movement as it was not only addressed by well-known Highland figures such as Charles Fraser Mackintosh and John Murdoch, but also by a number of prominent radicals and land agitators from outwith the area. We have already noted the speech of James Shaw Maxwell, the leader of the Georgeite Scottish Land Restoration League. William Saunders, a journalist who had helped to establish the Central Press Agency as well as newspapers in Plymouth and Hull, and was later to be Radical MP for Hull, also addressed the conference. For Saunders see Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain* (London 1990), 332.

⁸⁰ *PD*, 3S, 304, 855.

parliament in 1874).⁸¹ Ramsden was a conditional supporter of the Crofters' Bill; he regarded it as a fair attempt to deal with the complexities of the situation. He did not, however, support the notion of giving statutory rights to cottars or leaseholders. He was particularly worried about the implications of favouring the former class.⁸²

For my part, I cannot see, if you are to take land by compulsion and give it the cottars who do not possess it now, and who never have possessed it, why should you stop there? Why not take the whole land of the country and divide it up?

In the Committee stage he emphasised the importance of the Bill proceeding to the statute book in a form which made it clear that it was confined to the Highlands. In particular, he felt that if individual crofters were allowed to apply for extensions of crofting land, as opposed to the condition in the Bill that such applications required the co-operation of five or more crofters, 'the government will depart entirely from the special case of the crofters and make the bill one which is just as applicable to one part of the country as another'.⁸³ This was a concern of many of the critics of the Act itself and a criticism of many of its friends from the areas bordering the seven crofting counties which were excluded from its provisions. The MPs for Aberdeenshire East and West, Peter Esslemont and Robert Farquharson, were active in their demands for that county to receive the benefits of the Act, as was William Wedderburn on behalf of his constituency in Banffshire.⁸⁴

The MP for the Falkirk Burghs also sought to amend the area to which the Crofters' Bill applied. John Ramsay introduced an amendment to exclude the islands of Islay, Jura and Colonsay from

⁸¹For biographical details of Ramsden, see *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament*, edd. M. Stenton and J. Lees, 4 vols. (Sussex 1976–81) i, 323; *Times*, 16, 20 Apr. 1914.

⁸²*PD*, 3S, 304, 165–6, see also *ibid.*, 304, 777.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 304, 856.

⁸⁴Ewen A. Cameron, 'The Scottish Highlands as a Special Policy Area, 1886–1965', *Rural History* 8 (1997) 195–215, at 198–200.

its provisions.⁸⁵ This was not an entirely disinterested action as he was the proprietor of the Kildalton estate on Islay.⁸⁶ Ramsay had very decided views on a variety of issues relating to the Highlands and he gave voice to most of them during the debates on the Crofters' Bill in 1886. He was opposed to the provisions of the Bill as it attempted to create conditions for crofters to remain in the Highlands. That it did not provide facilities for migration and emigration was, in his view, 'a grave defect in the proposal'.⁸⁷ He argued that his proprietorship of land in Islay gave him special insight into the problems of the Highlands; indeed, the period of his ownership of the Kildalton estate had seen the emigration of around 400 Islay people in the early 1860s. Ramsay denied that this had involved coercion or evictions when this accusation was made in the House of Commons.⁸⁸ A second prominent theme in Ramsay's remarks concerned his view that the Gaelic language was an obstacle to progress in the Highlands.⁸⁹ This was a view he had held for some time. As early as 1863 he had published a pamphlet arguing for the promotion of education in the Highlands; this 'would not only benefit the people, but would solve many of the difficulties which attend the management of over-peopled Highland estates'. The extension of English was a crucial condition for such benefits: not only would it

⁸⁵ *PD*, 3S, 305, 56–8; J. P. B. Robertson, the MP for Bute, was successful in having the island of Arran excluded from the provisions of the Bill; see Cameron, 'Special Policy Area', 198.

⁸⁶ *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament* i, 323; M. Storrie, *Islay, The Biography of an Island* (Port Ellen 1981), 144–7.

⁸⁷ *PD*, 3S, 302, 1324.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 305, 62. For a laudatory account of Ramsay's changes to his estate see Freda Ramsay, *John Ramsay of Kildalton, J.P., M.P., D.L.; Being an Account of his Life in Islay and including the Diary of his trip to Canada in 1870* (Toronto 1970). I am grateful to my late colleague Mr John M. Simpson for drawing my attention to this book. See also the *Highlander*, 16 May 1873, for an overview of landownership on Islay.

⁸⁹ *PD*, 3S, 303, 127; *ibid.*, 305, 28.

be an aid to migration but a means for Highlanders to 'improve their circumstances ... on their native soil'.⁹⁰

Conclusion

This essay has sought to explore the relationship between the events of the 1880s and the perceptions of the Highlands in that decade. This is not simply a matter of outsiders looking in, but also of the greater degree of assertiveness shown by some Highlanders in this period increasing the visibility of the region. The complexity of the issue does not reside there, however. This assertiveness was not easily achieved: a deeply ingrained legacy of fear was only very slowly and cautiously discarded in its realisation. Although the poverty of Highland crofters during the difficult seasons in the early 1880s raised the profile of the region, it did so in a relatively unproblematic manner; indigence did not challenge existing stereotypes. When poverty gave way to protest, especially in the island of Skye, matters became more controversial. Existing perceptions were undermined as the police were attacked, sheriff officers deforced and military expeditions despatched to the western seaboard and islands. This occasioned condemnation by external critics, such as the editorial opinion of newspapers such as the *Scotsman* or the *Times*. The protests also caused problems for those who sought to mould Highland opinion for their own purposes: journalists like Alexander Mackenzie, or politicians like Charles Fraser Mackintosh, were fearful lest events drifted beyond their control. At the same time the protests had attracted the attention of radical opinion throughout the Britain and Ireland, and beyond, resulting in public addresses in the region by Michael Davitt from Ireland, Henry George from the United States, and Dr Evan Pan Jones from Wales. Radical journalism, such as that evident in the pages of *Justice*, also began to take notice of the crofters' protests, but

⁹⁰John Ramsay of Kildalton, M.P., *A Letter to the Right Honourable The Lord Advocate of Scotland on the State of Education in the Outer Hebrides in 1862* (Glasgow 1863), 4. The pamphlet (at 6) also contains a denial that there had been extensive enforced removals on the island of Islay.

from within particular ideological frameworks. The resultant attempts to legislate on the question brought other layers of perception to the surface and Parliamentarians of different political hues, often with diverse contacts to the region, engaged in forthright debate on the floor of the House of Commons.

Although protest recurred intermittently throughout the 1890s and early 1900s and further legislation was passed, the Highland land question was never so visible as it had been in the 1880s. Even when more sustained protest took place in the years immediately following the Great War it was not so politicised as it had been in the 1880s, and did not achieve visibility or contact with radical opinion: in short, it was more isolated. When poverty returned with a vengeance to the island of Lewis, the main site of the later agitation, it did not evince the sympathy evident in the 1880s, and, in a pattern tragically reminiscent of the 1840s and 1850s, mass emigration was the response.⁹¹ The importance of changing perceptions of the Highlands in the 1880s was that they were diverse and wide-ranging; this ensured that the Highland land problem, which seemed to parallel events in other parts of the United Kingdom, could not be ignored by the journalistic and political community.

⁹¹Marjory Harper, *Emigration from Scotland between the Wars: Opportunity or Exile?* (Manchester 1998), 71–112.